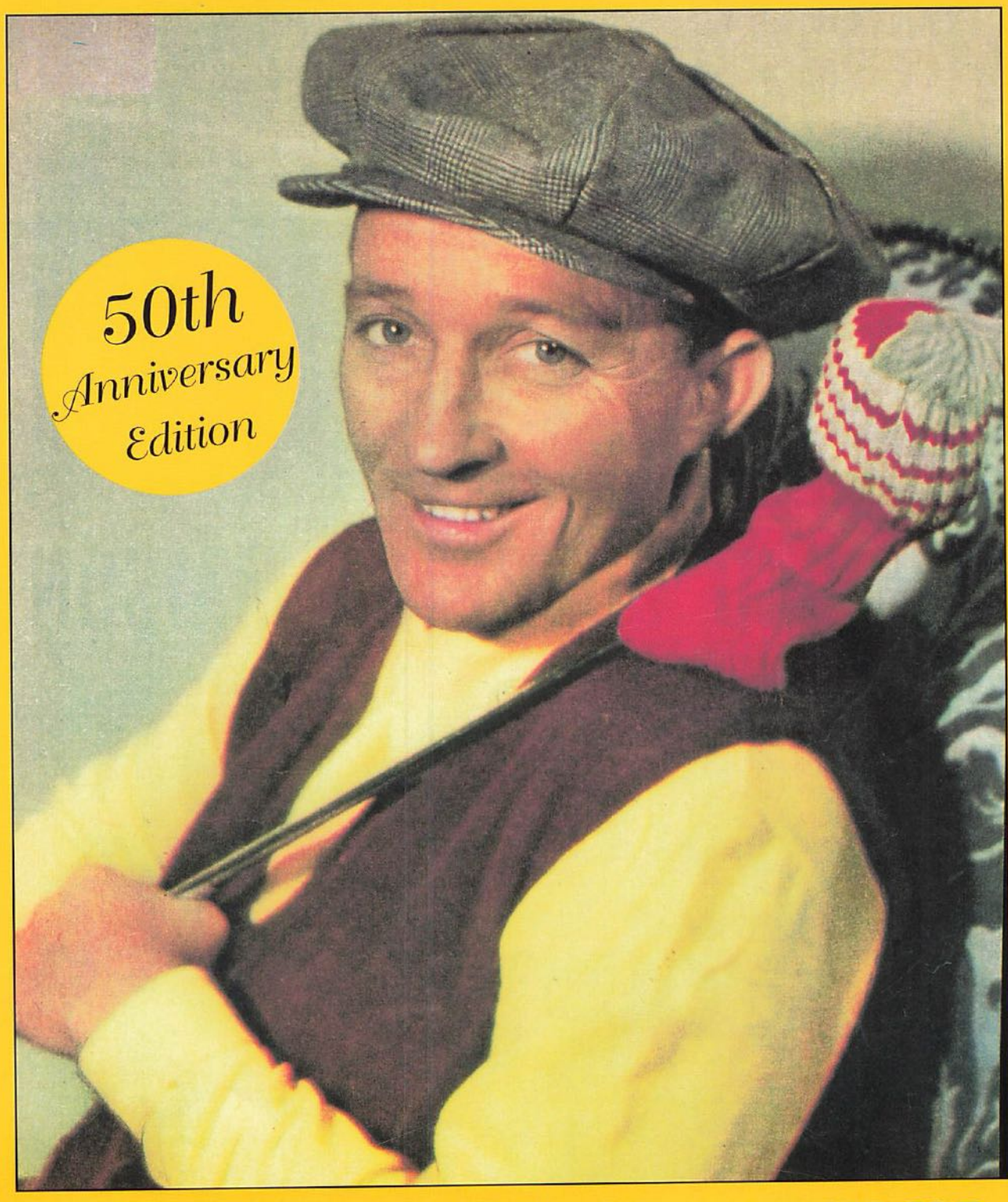
BING

SPRING
2000

No. 124



THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE

THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE

Founded 1950

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(also http.//members.aol.com/macwilmslo/BING_magazine.html)

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UK	£10 per annum
Mainland Europe, including Eire	£11 per annum
USA and Canada	US $20 per annum
Australia and New Zealand	A$30 per annum
South America	£15 per annum
Japan	£15 per annum

All remittances should be sent in **£ sterling** payable to 'Michael Crampton - ICC' with the exception of (a) US and Canadian members who should send their remittances in US dollars to F. B. Wiggins (b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars (c) Mainland European members (not Eire) who should pay Etty Gits in £ sterling. For addresses see page 2.

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor.
Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should be sent to the Hon. Secretary/Treasurer.

BING is the official journal of the International Crosby Circle and is published in the Spring, Summer and Winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC. All original material © Copyright ICC 2000.

EDITORIAL

"I'm really sincere in stating how grateful Iam to have you come tonight to help me celebrate my demi-centennial. That's true, yes sir, 50 years ago, that's half a C..."

With those words Bing introduced his concerts at the London Palladium in June 1976 and now it's our turn to echo those terms as we reach our demi-centennial as a Crosby club. Founded as the British Bing Club in 1950, the original members could not have dreamed that the organisation they formed in those austere days would be thriving and indeed expanding in the year 2000. How nice that some of them are still contributing to the magazine. We shall look at our history in a little more detail further on in this issue but can I just say how proud I am to be the Editor of the club magazine for such a prestigious and long running organisation. Long may we continue to enjoy our success.

It might have been nice to have had a 50th. anniversary edition almost completely filled with retrospective articles taken from our past magazines but there are so many things happening at present, we have had a struggle to fit them all into this edition. What a marvellous situation! The visit of Kathryn Crosby to the UK gave Bing some wonderful publicity and then of course we had the South Bank Show profile which Bert Bishop will examine in depth later on in this edition.

Several of us had the privilege of meeting Kathryn in November and, as you will read, a full and wide ranging discussion took place. I do hope that we shall be able to maintain our link with Kathryn now that contact has been re-established.

The media got very excited in December about Bing's FBI files which had been put on the Internet by an organisation called APB News. I could not believe the malicious and inaccurate articles which were prepared from these innocuous files and as you will see later in BING, action has been taken!

Sadly we learned of the death of Al Sutton, Editor of BINGANG for many years, as we readied this edition for the printer. Ken Crossland has prepared a brief obituary for us and our sincere condolences go to Al's family and friends.

Lionel's radio book has been delayed and our apologies to all of you anxiously awaiting it. It is a huge and incredibly detailed publication and we delivered this to the printer early in September. It took some time to agree a suitable layout and we eventually got the first proof back just before Christmas. I proof read it first putting liberal amounts of red ink on it and then I sent it down to Lionel to do the same. Parcelforce took 10 days to move the package the 170 miles from Cheshire to London and we got the book back to the printer at the end of January. The changed layout meant that many anomalies were thrown up and I had to smile at Lionel's letter to the printer which said:

"I am returning the proof sheets which Malcolm has passed on to me and they have gained so many arrows and blood stains that I am afraid

they are beginning to resemble Custer's Last Stand!"

We shall be carrying out a second proof reading and if necessary we shall do a third one too to ensure that we present this publication as well as possible. I guarantee that it will be worth the wait. Our thanks are due to Michael O'Toole's hard working team at Printcomp who are putting this publication together for us.

Lionel's next project will be a definitive TV listing using photographs and reviews to support the detail. In view of this, I shall not be reproducing any more of the Variety reviews in the magazine for the time being as Lionel will utilise most of them. We shall be looking to collect photos of Bing on television over the next few months. It will be a year or two before the final publication is ready.

I hope that you like the front cover as it is a rarely seen colour picture of Bing. The back cover is the artwork from the cover of Bing's Musical Autobiography which was supplied to us by Ernest Sutkowski, to whom we send our grateful thanks.

Malcolm Macfarlane

SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

Way back in March 1950 when Art Allen, Dot Hardiman, Jean Rainey and Leslie Gaylor founded the British Bing Club they could never have imagined that 50 years on, we would, in the ICC, be sending out around 1000 BING magazines to members around the world. We owe much to the original four and Malcolm will elaborate later on in this edition on the significant events occurring during the main periods of the club's history.

Looking back it is amazing just how much things have changed since 1950 when there were no personal computers, no DVDs or CDs. LPs were just beginning to surface in Britain and austerity meant that only poorly printed magazines were possible. The dedication and enthusiasm of the following members (not an exhaustive list) is writ large throughout the pages of 50 years of British Bing journals and I would like their names to be cited, by way of a 'thank you' for all that they have done or did to enthuse others with an interest in Bing Crosby's work and musical legacy.

We honour - Leslie Gaylor, Colin Pugh, Ralph Harding, Michael O'Toole, George O'Reilly, Fred Reynolds, Ted Laker, Geoff Milne, Stan White and the late Frank Murphy, Les Phythian, Reg Bristo, Pat Sullivan, Derek Parkes, Bob Roberts and Jack Manners not forgetting the present management team whose dedicated efforts have brought us one of the best journals of its kind. May we continue to prosper and bring Bing's musical legacy to a wider public.

MEMBERSHIP 2000

Following a suggestion from Wig Wiggins I am pleased to report the membership details for various regions and express the hope that we can make it 1000 members in 2000!

UK 510
USA 363
CANADA 25
EUROPE 25
AUSTRALIA 45
NEW ZEALAND 2
BRAZIL 3
JAPAN 2
COLOMBIA 1

This gives a total of 976 members and this is the highest figure in the club's long history. It has not been achieved without enormous effort and sacrifice on behalf of Wig and Laura Wiggins and the present management team including some long suffering wives. Members should appreciate this important point and reflect on what they could contribute to lighten the burden of your club officers.

RENEWALS

At the time of writing around 100 members still have to renew their membership and we appeal to them to send off the fee on receipt of this journal or the reminder, which will have been sent to them.

UNITED STATES

Wig's listing for this issue extends to 50 new members and once again he and Laura are to be congratulated on a magnificent effort to bring more Crosby enthusiasts into the ICC.

Starting off our listing is MICHAEL FEINSTEIN the popular American vocalist/pianist who was once an assistant to Ira Gershwin and helped Ira catalogue and annotate the music of Ira's brother, George. Welcome to the ICC Michael and we wish you every success as you bring the music of the 20's, 30's, and 40's to your discerning public.

Greetings to - Ann Ring (Tacoma, Washington), Angelina Sears (Providence, Rhode Island), Brian Hunt (McKinney, Texas), Al Wieniewski (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), Adrienne Karis (Scotia, NY), Rosa Harkness (Daytona Beach, Florida), Gloria Palmer (Arlington, Virginia), Irwin Goldberg (Freehold, NJ), Brian Weber (North Hollywood, Cal.), Ted Bouchard (Lynbrook, NY), Al Hostak (Renton, Wash.), William Greehy, Joe Franklin, Jay Diamond and David Levidow all of (New York, New York), Howard Levine (Coral Springs, Florida), Bill Hays (Prescott Valley, Arizona), Stephen Whitener (Eugene, Oregon), Cynthia & Ted Arenson, (Brooklyn, New York), Edwin Boyle (Bronx, New York), Joseph Saunders (Maspeth, New York), Michael Saunders (Pomona, New York), Edward Smiler (Sunnyside, New York), Michael Zaccardi (Bronx, New York), Alvin Taylor (Bayside, New York), Brian Hargett (Tupelo, Mississippi), SR Betty Glemboski (North Baltimore, Ohio), Don Cretella (Waterbury, Conn.), Louis Rossillo (Ridgefield, NJ), Robert Harrell (Santa Monica , Cal.), Lester Hershkowitz (Bronx, New York), Finn Tellefsen, (West Palm Beach, Florida), Gavin Wong, (Jamaica, New York), Fred Hembeck (Wappinger Falls, New York), Paul Hansen (Walnut Creek, Cal.) Michael Keiser (San Leandro, Cal.), Paul Rogan (Yonkers, New York), James Wilson (Chapel Hill, North Carolina), Steven Poole (Breese, Illinois), Keith Hickerson (Goreham, Maine), Jeffrey Geist (Elmwood Park, NJ), Rod Synnes (Shorewood, Wisconsin), Edward Crosby (Mica, Wash.), Wayne Glenn (Nixa, Missouri), Daniel Mefford (Canton, Michigan), Ralph Morris (Bethlehem, Penn.), Fred Romary (New Canaan, Conn.), Janice Vega (Mechanicville, New York).

CANADA

Douglas Marr (Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan,)

IRELAND

Mr D King (Dublin 16) and Edward O'Brian (Dublin 11)

UNITED KINGDOM

Our first member in the UK for 2000 is Jack Nation of Devon and Jack is proud to be joining us and to be the first member of the ICC in the new century! Jack has been a life long Bing enthusiast and hopefully he will find many new facts about Bing revealed by the ICC and its publications as will many of the following new members.

A.C.Baxter (Herts.), Tony Carpenter (East Sussex), Miss J Enno (Surrey), Mr C. Hall (Birmingham), Norman Hine (Devon), Len Hunter (Bedford), Doreen Hubbard (Essex), Richard Lain (Norfolk), Tom Maher (Worcs), Thomas Mark (Lancaster), Russell Mallon (Belfast), K J

Ruanne, (Angus), National Jazz Foundation Archive (Essex), Mr Popey (Essex), Bill Smith (Hants), Robert Taylor (Cheshire), A P Sandal (West Midlands), Richard Tucker (London), Barbican Library (London), D A Twell (West Sussex), P D Woolard (Essex), Frank Crocker (London), Cyril Brown (Cheshire), Jean Welch (Lancs), Gillian Marsh (Brighton), Raymond Fish (Norfolk).

To all members who join us in this anniversary year we extend the hand of friendship and trust that you will derive much benefit from your membership of the ICC.

DONATIONS

We are indebted to the following members who have given generously in addition to their annual subscription. Brian Lewis, Dave Spong, Ron Holder, Paul Hennessey, Goronwy Owen and Maggie Ryan have gifted the ICC many pounds over the years and we thank them sincerely for their support.

They are joined by Stan Woodford, George Patmore, John Martin, Tom White, Arnold Pope, Lew Grassby, Peter Monaghan, Maurice Beardmore, Oisin Andrew, Doug Hellier, Bill Wesley, Allan Lee, Brian Ford, Ken Gould, Trevor Wagstaff, H C Ross, Barry Lane, Donald Bostock, Wally Oldfield, Peter Howard, Auther Smith, John Stiles, Joan Griffiths, Tim Page, Ian Arnott, Sylvia Lawrence, Thomas Mooney, A C Bowerman, Bill Emery, John Tasker, Matthew & Jean Sprott, G L Robinson, Les Brice, Ron Field, Ken Perry, Douglas Haywood, Robert Larkin, D V Campkin, A D Fisher, John Bignell, Frank Kelly, Bert Bishop and Tony Slaughter.

GEORGE AND KATE O'REILLY

We have learnt that George and Kate have suffered poor health since mid December last and trust that they will be enjoying happier times by the time BING 124 reaches them. Our thoughts go out to them both.

DEATHS

We are sorry to learn of the death of Geoff Block, a long time member of the ICC, who died before Christmas. Our condolences are extended to Betty and Geoff's family.

QUESTIONNAIRE 2000

It is 10 years since we last asked members about their views on matters ICC and we think that it is now time once again to seek your opinions. We are thinking now about the right questions to ask and I would urge members to write to me now with their slant on how best to phrase the questionnaire.

We may include questions on: Collecting Bing on CD, LP, 78 - Magazine features - Areas of Bing's career to research - Members skills that could be used to help out with management - team tasks - Calendars and other publications. Do write to me if you want particular questions included and we will send out the questionnaire with the Winter issue of BING.

MICHAEL FREEDLAND BOOK

All 25 copies of the original purchase have sold out but a second order has been placed. If you require a copy please contact me upon receipt of BING 124, cost remains at £13 inc. P & P.

Other publications remain available along with back issues and I would be grateful for any support gained from members purchasing ICC publications.

Spring is the right time to thank the team for their dedicated work in 1999 and if 2000 proves as bountiful as last year then we have much to look forward to. Thanks to all team members and their long suffering wives and families for their dedicated service to ICC. Until Summer, my kindest personal regards.

Michael Crampton

INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31ST DECEMBER 1999

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Subscriptions & Donations	8008	BING (Printing and postage)	7087
Sales - Books	425	Information File	1441
Sales- Jonzo CDs	400	Jonzo CDs	433
Sales- Calendars	1000	Calendars	1078
Sales- Back Issues	120	Purchase - Books	380
Refunded Cheque	259	AGM	433
Interest	26	Secretarial	226
		Assistant Secretary - costs	49
		Editorial costs	169
		Internet Subscription	106
		Photographic Costs	32
		Sundries	264
Balance 31/12/98	8941	Balance 31/12/99	7481
	19179		19179

Notes:

1. The accounts do not show the full cost of printing and posting BING magazine. The costs for BING #123 will appear in the 2000 accounts.
2. The net income from our American representative (after deduction of his costs) is entered under Subscriptions and Donations
3. It should be noted that these accounts are a simple unaudited Income and Expenditure record and they do not show amounts owing or owed, or stock.

The Bing Crosby Calendar for 2000

We have been overwhelmed with compliments for the Calendar and many people seem to think it's worth it just for the photographs alone, never mind the calendar information. Containing a magnificent coloured cover and over 20 rare black and white photos of Bing, there is a song theme for each month. Here a few excerpts from the many letters we have received:

"I have just received my calendar for the year 2000 and I think it's just fantastic. Well worth the money, and something to treasure forever. A big thanks to Jim." (Margaret North, Staines)

"I have just received the great calendar from Jim Reilly. This is really the best to date." (Jack Hobday, East Ham)

"Congratulations to all concerned with the design and production of the calendar, a first class job, the best yet and that is saying a lot." (Stan Willcox, Leicester)

"Many thanks for the lovely calendar. What a beauty! You have done us proud! It is something to treasure." (Arthur Holmes, Middlesex)

So on behalf of all club members, can I pass on our thanks to Jim Reilly and Michael O'Toole for their work on the calendar.

There are still a few calendars left so if you want one, it can be ordered from Jim Reilly, 27 Beaulieu Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hants PO2 0DN. Price £5.50 for those in the British Isles and Europe. Please make cheques payable to Jim Reilly. Readers in the USA and Canada should order via Wig Wiggins whilst those in Australia and New Zealand should order via David Currington. Don't delay because you will be sorry if you miss it!

A companion CD containing the songs highlighted by the calendar has been prepared and is available from Barry Whittingham, El Rancho Grande, 25C Garton Close, Cinderhill, Nottingham NG6 8 RZ - price £5 + £1 p & p.

Looking ahead to 2001, Jim is wondering how members would feel about a calendar featuring various Bing collectibles such as the Bing stamp, posters, cigarette cards, sheet music and old magazine covers. Let Jim know what you think.

The History of Popular Music

BBC TV is preparing a major series on this subject which will be shown in the Autumn of 2001. I was contacted by them as part two of the series will cover Bing and Louis Armstrong and how they changed the form of popular singing forever. I have supplied background information and suggested various contributors, including Gary Giddins who has already agreed to take part. It's very pleasing to see this recognition of Bing's major contribution to changing the face of entertainment in the 20th. century.

My contact at the BBC put the following question to me.

"I wanted to ask you what are generally considered the most definitive Bing songs - from his Whiteman beginnings through to about 1950? I've got his chart listings here but I know it's not always those which were most commercially successful which are thought to be the most significant."

So, I fired off a list of probably 50 or 60 songs which in turn produced another challenging question:

"If you had to choose a top ten (impossible task, probably), which would they be? I suppose I am trying to focus on those songs which impinged not only on his career - his first big hit, etc. - but which were sort of defining moments."

Well, I gave ten songs which for me represent the defining moments at various stages of Bing's career. What answer would you have given? Write and tell me and I'll publish my list in the next issue.

ASCAP Announces Top 25 Songs of the Century; "Happy Birthday To You" Is Most Performed ASCAP Song

NEW YORK (ENTERTAINMENT WIRE) - As the century and millennium draw to a close this week, Marilyn Bergman, President & Chairman of ASCAP (the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) has announced ASCAP's 25 most-performed songs and musical works of the Twentieth Century.

Heading the list, with far and away the most performances, is a song known to virtually every adult and child in the United States and around the world — "Happy Birthday to You," by Mildred J. Hill and Patty Hill. This copyrighted song has been publicly performed hundreds of millions of times this century.

ASCAP, the oldest U.S. music rights licensing organization, was founded in 1914 (charter members included Irving Berlin, George M. Cohan , Jerome Kern and Victor Herbert). ASCAP has been licensing and tracking performances of the copyrighted music of its writer and publisher members for almost 86 years. Not only does ASCAP possess the greatest and most envied treasury of song standards, it also boasts an unparalleled contemporary repertory - the 1999 year-end Billboard Top Ten Charts are dominated by ASCAP songwriters. With over 90,000 members, 4 1/2 million copyrighted musical works of every musical genre and style, ASCAP has the highest revenues and deepest catalogue of any performing rights organization in the world.

The full "Century" list, in alphabetical order:

- "As Time Goes By" (Herman Hupfeld)
- "Blue Moon" (Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart)
- "The Christmas Song" (Mel Torme, Robert Wells)
- "Happy Birthday to You" (Mildred J. Hill, Patty Hill)
- "Hello Dolly" (Jerry Herman)
- "I Could Have Danced All Night" (Frederick Loewe, Alan Jay Lerner)
- "I Got Rhythm" (George & Ira Gershwin)
- "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" (Douglass Cross, George C. Corey, Jr.)

- "I Only Have Eyes for You" ((Harry Warren, Al Dubin)
- "Misty" (Erroll Garner, Johnny Burke)
- "Moon River" (Henry Mancini, Johnny Mercer)
- "Night and Day" (Cole Porter)
- "Over the Rainbow" (Harold Arlen, E.Y. "Yip" Harburg)
- "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" (Burt Bacharach, Hal David)
- "Rhapsody in Blue" (George Gershwin)
- "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" (J. Fred Coots, Haven Gillespie)
- "Stardust" (Hoagy Carmichael, Mitchell Parish)
- "Sweet Georgia Brown" (Ben Bernie, Kenneth Casey, Maceo Pinkard)
- "Tea for Two" (Irving Caesar, Vincent Youmans)
- "That Old Black Magic" (Harold Arlen, Johnny Mercer)
- "Theme from the Three Penny Opera (Mack the Knife)" (Kurt Weill, Berthold Brecht, Marc Blitzstein)
- "Unchained Melody" (Alex North, Hy Zaret)
- "The Way We Were" (Marvin Hamlisch, Alan & Marilyn Bergman)
- "White Christmas" (Irving Berlin)
- "Winter Wonderland" (Felix Bernard, Richard B.Smith)

The writers of "Happy Birthday to You," sisters Mildred and Patty Hill, were kindergarten and Sunday school teachers in Louisville, Kentucky during the 1890's and later taught at Columbia University in New York City. The song was originally written as "Good Morning to You." With the later addition of the birthday lyrics, the song was copyrighted as "Happy Birthday to You" in 1935. Published by Warner-Chappell, it is almost universally recognized as the official birthday song, and continues to be used extensively in films, television and theater.

ASCAP represents its members by licensing and distributing royalties for the non-dramatic public performances of their copyrighted works. ASCAP is the only U.S. performing rights organization governed by and for its members.

(Editor: Bing sang most of these songs at one time or another but what order would they have been in if the most performed song had come first? The Irish know....).

'White Christmas' the top song of the century in Ireland

The first entry of the new Millennium on the bulletin board of the Bing Crosby Internet Museum was submitted by a British Bing Club founder member, Michael O'Toole who gave the great news that a nation-wide poll conducted by the Irish radio station, RTE, had selected Bing's version of 'White Christmas' as the top song of the century. As Michael says, that selection coming from the land of U2, Van Morrison and Boyzone is quite something!

BING IN THE USA

HOW LOVELY WAS CHRISTMAS

The 1999 holiday season produced significant publicity for Bing related to the commercial release of new compact discs and video discs (DVD) in the United States. This kind of publicity is certainly good news in this day and age. On the CD front, the newspaper USA TODAY, which is sold nationwide as well as in many overseas countries, featured a front-page color reproduction of the cover of MCA's "The Very Best of Bing Crosby Christmas" album (MCAD-12019) in its December 17th edition. This spotlighted a special inside section on the "Best Holiday Music" of the year, which contained the following appraisal of Bing's CD:

> *"White Christmas", one of history's top sellers, is among 13 of the crooner's remastered holiday tunes. Highlights include Top 10 hit "I'll Be Home For Christmas" and "Adeste Fideles". Bing also duets three times with the Andrews Sisters."*

The WASHINGTON POST also carried a special section on "The Gift of Music" on December 10th and described "The Very Best of Bing Crosby Christmas" as follows:

> *"An 18-track collection of material recorded between 1942 and 1956, including, of course, "White Christmas" one of the best/longest-selling singles in music history, four other holiday hits and three lively teamings with the Andrews Sisters."*

The NEW YORK DAILY NEWS published a two-page feature on December 10th entitled "Top LPs of Christmas Past and Present" (a Freudian slip, they meant CDs, not LPs!), which headlined that "Der Bingle still holds down the top spot with "The Voice of Christmas" (MCAD2-11840), featuring his classic version of "White Christmas". The DAILY NEWS article went on to say:

> *"The title 'The Voice of Christmas' is correct. Bing sings 44 songs, including four versions of "White Christmas", and it's still not enough. When you finish, you want to start again."*

Even New York's VILLAGE VOICE got into the act on December 28th, when its rock music reviewer selected "The Best of Bing Crosby (20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection)" (MCAD-11942) as a "pick hit" with the following comments:

> *"Crosby perfected modern microphone technique and pioneered the musical use of magnetic tape. He was hip to the jive at a time*

when declaring yourself a Rhythm Boy was rebellion aplenty. But it's hard to hear these innovations in his countless records, partly because they've been superseded, partly because the essence of his art was an illusion of naturalness that fails if people notice it. So I've never found a record of his to get with until this 12-track cheapo, which features another Crosby — the one some count the most popular recording artist of the 20th century. The only title under-30's know here is "White Christmas". But for a child of the pre-rock era like me, these songs are pop music— not the well-bred harmonic pretensions pumped by Alec Wilder, but the Tin Pan Alley whose model is the Irving Berlin of "Play a Simple Melody,,. This was easy, sentimental music; my family sang "Dear Hearts and Gentle People" at parties, and I knew the words to "Swinging on a Star" by age four. But if to me it sounds like a social fact, to someone younger it's the indelible trace of a culture now lost. And it's Crosby who transforms it into a given."

A new DVD release of two of Bing's most popular films on one disc also received good reviews. USA TODAY had this to say in its issue of November 12th:

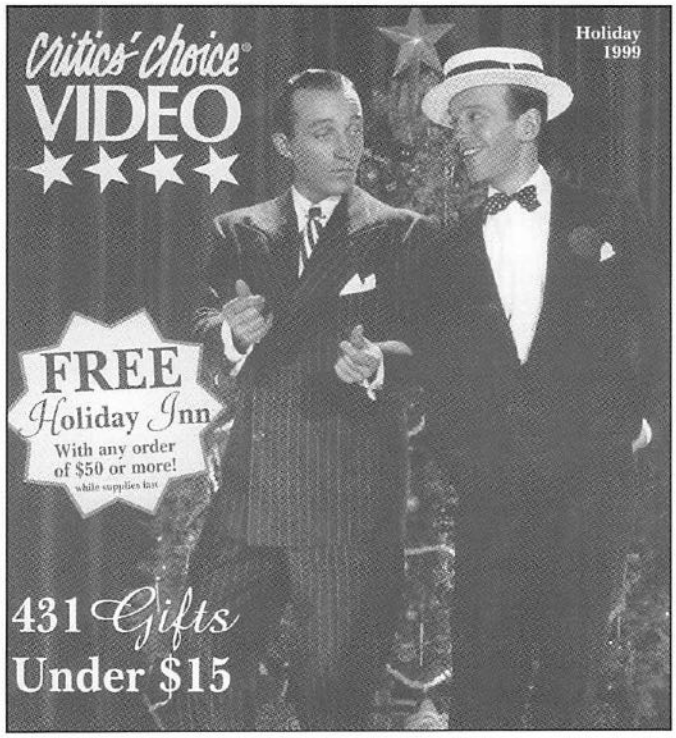
"Though what sounds like the definitive Bing Crosby biography (by Gary Giddins) is about a year away from publication, the most popular entertainer of the century's first half still gets just due in a twofer that ought to encourage more DVD manufacturers to combine inventory they already own. On one $30.00 Universal disc (#20394) you get "Going My Way" (1944), the biggest box office hit of the World War II era and winner of seven Oscars. Paired with it is the Crosby - Fred Astaire "Holiday Inn" (1942), whose bountiful Irving Berlin score includes "White Christmas" — the biggest selling single of the same era (and that's just for starters)."

The SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE reported as follows on January 8th:

"Bing, Beatles and Elvis Top New Releases — oldies but goodies surface after years of gathering dust— If someone in the family got one of those new - fangled DVD players for Christmas, what could be a more complementary gift than the "Going My Way" and "Holiday Inn" double feature DVD that pairs those classics on a single disc? "Going My Way" earned 1944 Oscars for Best Picture, Best Actor (Bing Crosby) and Best Supporting Actor (Barry Fitzgerald), but the one we really love is 1942's "Holiday Inn" with Crosby's "Freedom Man", Fred Astaire's firecrackers, Irving Berlin's score (including "White Christmas"), Louise Beaver's lectures, Jonesy the turkey and those exploding peach preserves."

To top it all off, a full colored photo of Bing and Fred from "Holiday Inn" was featured on the cover of the Christmas season catalog from the national American mail order company, CRITICS' CHOICE VIDEO, which is reproduced below. Given the paucity of good publicity about Bing these days, the kind of coverage described above was particularly important because of its impact on the general public. It certainly was refreshing to read such favorable comments about some of Bing's recordings and films during the past holiday season. Let's hope there will be more to come as we move ahead in the year 2000. By the way, ICC members who are becoming DVD collectors might like to know that a total of five of Bing's films are now available in the United States in the increasingly popular DVD format, as follows:

THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S
GOING MY WAY
HOLIDAY INN
ROAD TO MOROCCO
ROAD TO UTOPIA



BING FEATURED IN STEREOPHILE MAGAZINE

STEREOPHILE is an expensive monthly magazine which caters to those folks who used to be known as hi-fi enthusiasts. You know—the types that invest more in a pair of speakers than most of us would consider spending in a lifetime of record collecting. Each issue features detailed technical reviews of the latest high-priced audio equipment, is filled with impressive manufacturer advertising and includes just a few pages in the back of the magazine for a limited number of compact disc reviews. Since it is a little out of my league, I confess that I was not at all familiar with STEREOPHILE until I was telephoned late last year by one of our fellow Bing enthusiasts, Tom Gillett from Wilton, Connecticut, who is a contributing editor to the magazine.

Tom writes a regular column in STEREOPHILE called "Sam's Space", in which he reviews some of the latest stereo equipment under the pen name of "Sam Tellig" (which I judge is Thomas Gillett sorta spelled backwards). Tom called to tell me that he was a little tired of writing

only about tuners and speakers and the like. For a change, he wanted to include something about Bing in a forthcoming issue, and what did I think of such an idea? I told him that I fully supported any and all GOOD publicity for Bing, and to give it his best shot, which he certainly did in the January 2000 issue of STEREOPHILE. As a result, I am pleased to report that I have been receiving phone calls and letters about Bing from all over the country ever since that issue reached its subscribers. We have gained quite a few new ICC members and my sales of JONZO CDs have also increased substantially, so my sincerest thanks to Tom (Sam) for his most welcome words on Bing's behalf.

Here is the text of Tom Gillett's feature in STEREOPHILE:

BING CROSBY!

I have to get this out of my system before the R2D4 issue. I am a Bing Crosby fanatic, and have been ever since I first heard Der Bingle on my Uncle Stan's wind-up gramophone. (Stanley Robinson of Liverpool, England, never did take to tubes. He died before transistors.) So I give you this tip: The year 2000 is the year of Der Bingle's return.

A new biography of Bing Crosby by the great jazz writer, Gary Giddins, is scheduled to appear later this year. Who knows—it may spark a Crosby revival. And if Bing revives, so will a lot of other American music from the 1920s and '30s, because Bing, who sang with Paul Whiteman, was at the center of it all. The best Bing is early Bing, and the best early Bing on CD is on JONZO RECORDS of England, which has been issuing "THE CHRONOLOGICAL BING CROSBY" on CD. Don't look for these discs—there will eventually be 25 or more—in record stores, on the Internet, or even from that worthy source of 1920s and '30s music, www.worldsrecords.com.

Nope. If you want these discs, you need to contact F. B. Wiggins— "Wig" Wiggins to his friends and fellow Crosbyphiles. Write: F. B. Wiggins, 5608 North 34th Street, Arlington, VA 22207. No e-mail or Web address. Tell Wig that Sam sent you. If you're a Crosby fan, do it. You'll be richly rewarded. The discs are a labor of love. The sound quality—considering the age of the recordings—is superb. And this is from someone who, as a child, heard many of the 78s on Uncle Stan's gramophone. What I wouldn't give to have that old shellac now! Where to start? You aren't going to buy 10 or 20 CDs all at once, after all. I'd start with Volumes 7 and 8. Volume 7 (JZCD-7) has such treasures as "Great Day" with Bing and the Whiteman band. The disc is worth it for this track alone. Volume 8 (JZCD-8) contains such gems as "I Surrender, Dear", "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams", "I'm Through With Love" and "I Found a Million Dollar Baby". In a five-and-ten-cent store. Where else? Want to start with three discs? Take Volume 5 as well.

My wife, Marina, has now listened to hours of Crosby, along with Al Bowlly (another Uncle Stan fave), Rudy Vallee, and many others from the 1920s and '30s. She's finally warmed to Bing. Meanwhile, her father can't get enough of Crosby—even though he understands few of the words.

I look forward to Giddins' biography. In my opinion, Bing was the greatest. Yup. Better than you-know-who. What a joy to have the complete, chronological Bing, with alternate takes of many of the numbers! One piece of advice. If you want to start collecting this series, do so now. These CDs are said to be limited editions. They're priced at $18.50 or $20.00 each, including shipping. Write to Wig right now.

Bing Crosby, eh?" said my friend Lars, one night over dinner, with Der Bingle playing in the background. "I heard this story ... there was a shopping mall that had a problem with teenagers congregating and making a nuisance of themselves—loitering."

"And?"

"The solution was to play Bing Crosby records. It chased the kids right out of the mall."

"Bing can chase my wife Marina out of the kitchen."

"It's a yenerational thing, I suppose", said Lars.

Don't you believe it! Whatever your age—or accent—Bing is great. And Bing is back. You heard it here first.

—Sam Tellig—

THE JAY DIAMOND RADIO SHOW IN NEW YORK

Jay Diamond is a new ICC member from New York City who hosts a daily talk show on radio station WEVD at 1050 on the AM dial. Jay also happens to be a very big Bing Crosby fan, and last October, on the anniversary of Bing's death, Jay decided to change his regular current events talk format for one evening and devote three hours to the Old Groaner.

In addition to playing a number of Bing's recordings, Jay welcomed two guests to the program for an in-depth discussion of various aspects of Bing's career, especially his early jazz-influenced years. Joining Jay were two well-known jazz and popular music writers from the New York area, Bill Milkowski (who writes for the JAZZ TIMES) and Gary Giddins (of VILLAGE VOICE fame). The latter gentleman is certainly quite familiar to all ICC members.

Jay, Bill and Gary spent most of the three-hour broadcast discussing Bing's performances as a singer and actor, and the influences that shaped and affected his extraordinary talents. Considerable discussion concentrated on Bing's broadly-based early exposure through phonograph records to music that ranged from Al Jolson to Irish tenors to opera to marching bands, and on Bing's natural rhythmic sense and affinity for jazz. After all, it was pointed out, Bing's instrument was the drums. And his interest in jazz eventually led to his apprenticeship with Paul Whiteman and the opportunity to associate with musicians like Bix Beiderbecke, Eddie Lang, Joe Venuti, Frank Trumbauer and the Dorsey brothers, as well as to the development of a mutual admiration society between Bing and Louis Armstrong. As Gary Giddins stated, Bing was at the center of the talented group of jazz musicians who joined Whiteman in the last years of the Roaring Twenties, and the jazz influences in his singing that evolved in those days stayed with Bing all of his life. Unlike most popular singers, Bing had a natural rhythmic style that permeated all his performances, even when he sang

standard ballads. To illustrate these comments, Jay Diamond played several of Bing's better known jazz recordings during the program, including the rare "B" take of 'Dinah', with the Mills Brothers, "Some of These Days" (described as "an explosion of vocal fireworks"), "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby", his duet with Connee Boswell on "Basin Street Blues" and his 12-inch version of "Pennies From Heaven" with Louis Armstrong and Jimmy Dorsey.

To me, these examples from Bing's recorded jazz repertoire certainly proved their points about his rhythmic sense and vocal dexterity during the first decade of his career, before Jack Kapp cajoled Bing into becoming the musical everyman of popular ballad singing. Bing may have been tagged as a crooner in the popular press, but he was much more than that, which his fellow musicians appreciated better than the general public, as Jay, Bill and Gary emphasized.

Another subject covered effectively during Jay's program was Bing's film career, and here the main points were that many of Bing's films during his first decade at Paramount were largely a reflection of his own character and lifestyle, that of a wandering troubadour who loves life and enjoys it to the full while doing the things he really wants to do. "PENNIES FROM HEAVEN" and "SING YOU SINNERS" were cited as early examples of a more in-depth acting ability than was usually thought of on Bing's part, long before a significant change in appreciation of his talents began with the Father O'Malley films, leading eventually to dramatic successes such as "THE COUNTRY GIRL" As far as Bing's abilities as a movie comedian were concerned, the three commentators remarked about his physical mannerisms which were quite reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin, who Bing himself cites as one of his favourite screen actors. They also emphasized Bing's thorough preparation for his film roles and punctuality on the set, characteristics that always evoked praise from his fellow actors.

Gary Giddins was asked many questions about his biography of Bing, which Gary promised will be published at last - after ten years of research and writing - in the Fall of 2000. Gary commented that no other artist in any field has so dominated popular culture as Bing did in the 1930s and 1940s, nor has anyone since had such a broad impact in so many fields—radio, records and films—at the same time. Gary also said that the major discovery of all his research has been that Bing Crosby really was a "regular guy" who actually was like his popular image, a fellow that his co-workers liked and admired, despite criticism to the contrary that has besmirched Bing's name since his death. Gary emphasized that Bing was an unstudied and unaffected man who worked hard to give everyone the impression that he didn't work hard at all. And he succeeded in doing just what he wanted to do while entertaining the world at the same time for fifty years.

Jay Diamond illustrated the fun side of Bing by playing a couple of his most famous recording blow-ups, the "can't stop laughing" version of "We're a Couple of Soldiers" and the famous "they left out eight bars" ad-libs to "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams". While very familiar to Bing collectors, these blow-ups must have been a pleasant surprise to Jay's radio audience. After three hours of their detailed review of Bing's life and career, Jay and his guests concluded that while Bing is not very familiar to younger people today—except at Christmas time—such forthcoming developments as the publication of Gary's book might help overcome that problem by creating a renewed interest in all aspects of Bing's many talents.

During the last part of the broadcast, Jay Diamond telephoned me here in Virginia in order to give an on-the-air plug to the ICC and to encourage his listeners to join the ICC and support our efforts to keep Bing's legacy alive. Jay and Gary were both very complimentary about the ICC's BING magazine and praised it highly to their listeners. As a result, I am pleased to report a significant increase in ICC membership from the greater New York area, and I would like to thank Jay Diamond very much for his efforts to awaken a greater interest in Bing through his broadcast. Well done, Jay, and keep up the good work!

THE AMERICAN CLASSICS RADIO NETWORK

Special radio programs devoted to any aspect of Bing's career are a rarity in the United States these days, especially ones that can be heard nationwide. However, in recent years, with the advance of space satellite technology, a number of so-called syndicated radio services have been established which provide special programming that can be fed by satellite to local stations across the country. Some feature recordings of artists from the 1950s and '60s (and rarely the '40s), and it is possible to hear Bing occasionally on these broadcasts. Unfortunately, you seldom hear much of Bing beyond the familiar chestnuts such as "Swinging on a Star", "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral", "Gone Fishin'" and "True Love".

Accordingly, I was very pleased to receive a telephone call just after Thanksgiving from fellow ICC member Ron Cannatella in New Orleans, who has had a popular FM radio program in the Crescent City area featuring singers of the Big Band era, including Bing. Ron was calling to tell me that he had been commissioned by the American Classics Network in New York to prepare a two-hour radio special for the 1999 Christmas season that would be provided to radio stations throughout the country for broadcast in mid-December. Ron worked extremely hard to research and prerecord his program, providing the New York network with three hours of holiday songs by Bing and some of his friends for the program, which was later edited in New York to fit their two-hour time frame and allow for the inevitable commercial announcements.

In the editing process, most of Ron's older 1940's Decca material was dropped in favor of Bing's later Christmas recordings for Warner Brothers and Daybreak, which was a disappointment to him. Nevertheless, the final result was still a great boost for Bing on national radio this past holiday season. Ron is to be congratulated for his dedication and success in keeping Bing before the public in such a welcome manner. Ron hopes he will be allowed to produce other such programs in the future for the American Classics Network, featuring Bing and other artists on different themes. I certainly hope so, as this company advertises itself as providing "the music America loves to hear" by "American musical legends", and that certainly describes Bing to perfection.

Ron introduced his broadcast as "seasonal music featuring Bing Crosby" and stated that Bing is "still revered the world over" and is "synonymous with the Christmas season everywhere". To share the breadth and appeal of Ron Cannatella's radio tribute to Bing during the 1999 holidays, here is the list of all the selections that were used during the two-hour broadcast:

1 - And the Bells Rang
2 - Silver Bells
3 - Happy Holiday
4 - Count your Blessings Instead of Sheep
5 - Round and Round the Christmas Tree
6 - White Christmas
7 - Do You Hear What I Hear?
8 - Jingle Bells
9 - Winter Wonderland
10 - Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.
11 - Frosty the Snowman
12 - Good King Wenceslas
13 - Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!
14 - I Wish You a Merry Christmas
15 - The Christmas Song
16 - Peace on Earth/The Little Drummer Boy (w David Bowie)
17 - Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
18 - Here Comes Santa Claus
19 - What Child Is This? / The Holly and the Ivy
20 - Deck the Hall
21 - God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen
22 - Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem
23 - The Littlest Angel
24 - It's Beginning To Look a Lot Like Christmas
25 - Silent Night
26 - Go Tell It on the Mountain
27 - O Holy Night
28 - The First Noel
29 - Away in a Manager
30 - The Secret of Christmas

A great tour-de-force for Bing by Ron Cannatella this past holiday season, and one that could be heard all across the land, just like the old days when Bing's Christmas broadcasts were an annual event for everyone. It was a wonderful way to end the 20th century.

BING ON TELEVISION IN THE USA

Bing's films continue to appear on the national cable television networks in the United States every month, but the variety has been rather limited recently. Showing over the past four months were the following:

November 1999

ANYTHING GOES (1956) — A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT — THE COUNTRY GIRL — HIGH SOCIETY — ROAD TO BALI — ROAD TO RIO — STAGECOACH (1966)

December 1999

ANYTHING GOES (1956) — THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S — HIGH SOCIETY — ROAD TO BALI — ROBIN AND THE SEVEN HOODS — STAGECOACH (1966) — WHITE CHRISTMAS

January 2000

ROAD TO BALI — ROAD TO RIO — STAGECOACH (1966) — THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

February 2000

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT — HIGH SOCIETY — REACHING FOR THE MOON — ROAD TO BALI — ROAD TO RIO — ROBIN AND THE SEVEN HOODS — STAGECOACH (1966)

And that's all the news from this side of the Atlantic for the springtime, but I look forward to being with everyone again in the next issue of BING this summer.

F. B. (Wig) Wiggins
February 15, 2000

(Editor: Plenty happening stateside and what a great article in STEREOPHILE. The Jay Diamond show was a tremendous bonus too and perhaps a Bing revival in the USA is well and truly underway. There do seem to be more reviews of his CDs lately and here's one I picked up from the Bing Crosby Internet Museum web site which had originally come from the Daily Nebraskan paper. With thanks to that journal we reproduce the review below.)

The Very Best of Bing Crosby Christmas

(U-WIRE) LINCOLN, Neb. — When it comes to Christmas music, one name almost always comes to mind. No, it's not the Chipmunks, Dork. I'm talking about the timeless sounds of Bing Crosby - a man whose voice was so smooth and warm, it continues to set the tone for Christmas year after year.

Recently, MCA and Decca records released yet another Bing Crosby Christmas album, this one titled "The Very Best of Bing Crosby Christmas." With 18 quality recordings of Crosby's many versions of Christmas classics, the name is quite fitting. Despite having recorded his first Christmas carols in 1935, Crosby's voice carries a class and tradition that modern artists such as Mariah Carey and 98o simply can't capture. With Crosby's voice, you can almost hear the chestnuts roasting on an open fire. With Mariah Carey and 98o, you just hear the seeping saline of a faulty boob job or the doofus mumbling of a frat boy praying for a Porsche this year.

That's just not Christmas.

Not only does "The Very Best Of Bing Crosby Christmas" have a large number of traditional carols, including "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas," "Adeste Fideles," "Silent Night" and "Silver Bells," it includes some of Crosby's more lively and contemporary songs as well. Tunes such as "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Santa Claus is Coming To Town" blend seamlessly with Crosby's more sombre tones.

While the selection of any Christmas compilation is important, the quality of the actual recordings should not be overlooked. This collection excels in that area by including a new transfer to CD of Crosby's rendition of Irving Berlin's "White Christmas" from the 1942 film "Holiday Inn." The original recording of "White Christmas" has been damaged by excessive wear to the point that transferring it onto CD format is impossible. However, a better quality commercial pressing became available and was used on "The Very Best of Bing Crosby Christmas."

Throughout his career, Crosby was responsible for well over 40 different Christmas recordings, and "The Very Best Of Bing Crosby Christmas" is a great package of his best work. It comes as yet another heartfelt gift from a man who already gave Christmas so much.

Jason Hardy

My Cup Runneth Over

Kathryn Crosby was in London in November and several ICC members attended a very special dinner party with her.

As mentioned in our last edition, Derek Bailey of Landseer Films prepared an hour long profile of Bing for the UK's prestigious arts programme, The South Bank Show, which was transmitted on December 26 and is reviewed elsewhere in this edition. The programme came about thanks to the intervention of Irish entrepreneur and ICC member, George O'Reilly. Through his long relationship with the Crosby family, George was able to encourage Kathryn Crosby to support the project and arising from this, Kathryn agreed to obtain some publicity for the programme. She was due to pass through London on her way to Russia and arrangements were made for her to meet those ICC members who had helped with the preparation of the programme.

Kathryn had arrived in London on Tuesday November 23 and the following morning she was interviewed and photographed by 'Hello' magazine which involved six changes of clothing. A one and half hour meeting with the researcher for the Channel 5 Open House with Gloria Hunniford show followed in the afternoon before Kathryn took tea with the Manager of Brown's Hotel in London where she was staying.

George O'Reilly had arranged for us to entertain Kathryn in the Lord Byron Suite at Brown's Hotel and those attending in addition to George and Kathryn were Jim Reilly, Lionel Pairpoint, Ron Bosley, Frank Brannigan and me from the ICC. Alan Fisher (Bing's butler) was also there together with Peter McCoy, who is a hotelier from Northallerton in Yorkshire and an admirer of Kathryn's film work. Just before 7:30 p.m., Kathryn came into join us and greeted each one of us in turn. We took our places at the dinner table and the conversation flowed very easily almost straightaway. As soon as the wine was poured, I raised my glass and attempted to propose a toast to Kathryn and her birthday which was the following day. Kathryn smiled but gave the impression that she did not like to remember her birthdays and instead we drank to 'Absent Friends'.

Kathryn was born in West Columbia, Texas and I asked if she ever went back to the town. She said that she did now and again and she went on to tell us about some of her relatives including her great uncle who was shot and killed by Jesse James. We talked about Kathryn's early films and her co-stars such as Audie Murphy, Victor Mature and James Stewart. She said that Audie was a very nice man and she clearly enjoyed making 'The Guns of Fort Petticoat' with him. He was on the short side however and Kathryn used to stand in a trench for her scenes with him even though she is not tall herself. My own favourite of Kathryn's early films is 'The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad' and there was some good natured banter about this during the evening.

I asked Kathryn whether she found it annoying to be constantly asked about Bing when she herself has had a very busy life since his death. I likened her situation to that of Lauren Bacall, who is always being quizzed about Humphrey Bogart, or Liza Minelli who is constantly having to answer questions about her mother. Kathryn said no, she loved to talk about her life with Bing especially with people such as ourselves who shared her love of him.

We went on to discuss her life since Bing's death and in 1978 she toured the USA in the play 'Same Time, Next Year'. Alan Fisher accompanied her and had to act as her dresser which was not exactly his forte with the result that he managed to stretch some of the early performances at which he fulfilled the role by half an hour or more. She was asked to star in 'The Seagull' in Russia and she accepted with alacrity. Kathryn said that she cannot speak much Russian and she learns her lines phonetically which must be incredibly difficult. She demonstrated some of her Russian words most impressively to the amusement of us all. After her spell in Russia, she had a lead role in the revival of 'State Fair' which toured the USA and then had a useful run on Broadway. More engagements in Russia followed and she put together a cabaret show called 'My Life With Bing' which finished with the song 'My Cup Runneth Over'. She had just finished a month's performances in 'Pal Joey' in San Francisco and was on her way for more work in Russia. I said that it was obvious that she still loved to perform and she agreed wholeheartedly.

Kathryn is delighted with her dessert.

Another book?

I asked whether she would be writing a follow-up to her book 'My Life With Bing' and she replied that she had written about the next eight years of their life together but parts of the last three years of Bing's life were a bit sad and she had not had the enthusiasm to continue. I told her of Gary Giddins' plans to publish his book in two volumes with the second part coming out in May 2003 which would be the centenary of Bing's birth. I suggested that would be a very good time for her book to be published too and she thanked me for my suggestion,

which may well give her the impetus to finish her book. I have since sent her the updated version of my diary of Bing's life covering the period from 1966 in the hope that it will help to tie down some of the dates.

The presence of Alan Fisher added an extra dimension to the dinner party and he chimed in regularly to expand on some of the events described, either referring to Kathryn as "Mrs. Crosby" or occasionally as 'Caterina'. Alan worked for the Duke and Duchess of Windsor before going to the Crosbys and subsequently he became butler to Prince Charles and Princess Diana. He is retired now and has had some health problems but he seems well at present. Alan said that he would very much like to attend our annual meeting in Leeds and I said that I would arrange for him to be invited.

Alan joined in the conversation as we discussed Kathryn's children. Harry lives in New York ("he is no longer married") where he is a banker working on mergers and acquisitions. Alan was going out to stay with him the following week. Mary Frances is now married to Mark Brodka, a lawyer and has recently had "a lovely baby" named Benjamin Connor Crosby Brodka. She lives in Malibu and is thoroughly enjoying motherhood. Nathaniel and his wife, Cathy, and their four children live in Scottsdale, Arizona and he is still active in a golf business. As Kathryn said, the family 'trisects' the USA but they manage to see each other quite often. Kathryn herself lives at Genoa, Nevada most of the time with the Hillsborough house only being used by family members and friends on occasion.

The subject of the first family came up and both Alan and Kathryn seemed to feel that some of the problems were caused by the housekeeper Georgina Hardwicke who would allow the boys to stay out until 2 a.m. in the morning and would then tell Bing that they were in at 10:00 p.m. In referring to Gary Crosby, Kathryn ventured the opinion that he was "born angry, but in turn he could be so sweet." After serious surgery, Gary convalesced for 6 weeks at the Hillsborough house under Kathryn's watchful eye but within a short time he put his name to the book 'Going My Own Way' which Kathryn is still furious about. We mentioned the proposed posthumous duet between Gary and his late father (similar to the one involving Nat and Natalie Cole) and asked if it had come off before Gary's death. Kathryn told us that it had not as she controlled Bing's side of the action and she did not want it to happen. I suggested that it might have been 'commercial' but clearly Kathryn did not want it to happen because of Gary's book.

Barriers for Bing projects?

With some trepidation, I told Kathryn that I had a perception (which might not be reality) that I wished to run past her. The ICC exists to perpetuate Bing's

At the Trout Hotel in 1966.

memory and many members perform almost heroic acts to promote Bing. I also gave the examples of the work undertaken by Ernest Sutkowski and his band of helpers who ensure that Bing is heard regularly on the radio. My perception was that often too many barriers were being placed in the way of projects involving Bing with the result that producers faced with several choices would take the line of least resistance. I acknowledged that royalties needed to be paid but I wondered if the right balance was being struck between encouraging the project and ensuring payment was received from it.

In response, Kathryn took us back to a time just after Bing's death when she found herself in, what she described as an 'adversarial' situation. She had to appoint her own lawyers independent from those she had always used, who had of course been Bing's lawyers. In due course, she had to examine the performance of Bing's lawyers and she was very critical of them. At around the same time, all sorts of liberties were being taken with the images of deceased stars and for instance there was a T shirt with an image of Judy Garland "in a carnal embrace with the Wizard of Oz." Legislation was therefore passed so that an appropriate person could register someone's image for copyright purposes. Kathryn duly registered Bing's image and she has control of anything bearing this. Also some of the prior contracts could not be found and in many cases fresh negotiations had to be undertaken to fix new remuneration. An example of this was the 'White Christmas' video which Kathryn said that she had delayed for five years despite pressure from Mrs. Danny Kaye. However the delay meant that an increased royalty was eventually paid which improved the income flow from the product to her children by 3000%.

In acknowledging the need for careful and business like arrangements to be in place, I said that there still seemed a danger that too severe negotiations would stop commercial ventures involving Bing which in turn would mean that his image would fade and royalties would drop. Kathryn acknowledged my concern and said that she was "not hungry" but if I came across a venture that I felt should go ahead, I should write to her Trustee, Bill Sullivan, (who has now trained as a lawyer) and he would examine the proposition.

During the break between courses, Kathryn kindly signed copies of her books which several of us had brought along. In signing my copy of 'Bing and Other Things', she said that it must be a pirate edition as the dust cover was different, but I showed her that it was the British edition, hence the different cover. Ron Bosley had prepared copies of a photo taken of Kathryn in 1966 which she autographed as well so that all present could take away a copy. A copy of the photo (which is reproduced here) was also given to Kathryn. I told her that the photo had been taken at the Trout Hotel and instantly she said "at Cockermouth" which certainly impressed me with her powers of recall.

In looking through her books, I picked out the photo of her with John Scott Trotter and said that he seemed to be a real gentleman. Kathryn confirmed this view and Alan Fisher pointed out that it was Kathryn who had really brought JST into the Crosby home life. Prior to that, the relationship had solely been one of Bing's business liaisons. Kathryn recounted the story of the night when John Scott took her to the ballet and she finished up dancing into the early hours with Nureyev at a party afterwards. Eventually John Scott got Kathryn home at 5 a.m., leading Bing to demand a divorce!

Another photo was of Phil Harris and we talked about Phil and his wife Alice Faye. Apparently Phil was a native American and Kathryn said that he had an in-built need to hunt and at certain times of the year he would go off to do just that. A name which I often come across in connection with Bing is Trader Vic (Vic Bergeron) and I raised this with Kathryn. She smiled as she recalled that Bing was a little anxious about introducing her to Vic because he 'talked dirty". Kathryn said that "whilst he talked dirty, he thought clean" and she obviously enjoyed his company. I noticed a picture of Bing's mother in her book and I asked Kathryn how she got on with her. There was anticipatory laughter from around the table as Kathryn appeared to pause to collect her thoughts before saying that "She loved me." Bing's sisters were out of favour, Bob Crosby (who Kathryn said was his mother's favourite) had fallen from grace as he had married twice, so Kathryn was popular. Kathryn told the story of the time at a social gathering when Bing was pouring himself a second scotch when his mother said "Bing you're drinking too much". Bing put his glass down and apologised to his mother. This led me to suggest that Bing had lived in fear of his mother throughout his life but Kathryn quickly corrected me saying "No, he respected her all his life." Bob and Dolores Hope were mentioned too and Dolores had just taped a contribution to the forthcoming South Bank Show programme. Dolores is now aged 90, Kathryn said that she is "wonderful".

Golf inevitably raised its head and Kathryn indicated that she played. I asked if she played often and she said not but she smiled as she said "but when I do, I'm very good." We talked about Bing's pro-am at Pebble Beach and Kathryn said that she took the decision to withdraw the Crosby name because the corporate sponsors were taking more and more from the tournament and the amount going to charities was being squeezed. She has relaunched a golf tournament in the Crosby name at Bermuda Run and she is very proud of the millions of dollars this has generated for charity, more than would have been produced if the Pebble Beach format had been continued. The professional golfers do not play at Bermuda Run but many friends and celebrities put in teams. For instance, it is popular with the Chief Executive Officers of many large companies who use it for entertainment purposes.

Kathryn's nursing experiences cropped up quite often during the evening and again this was something she really enjoyed. Alan Fisher and Kathryn talked about fashions and pottery together and the name of Lord Egremont (and his home at Petworth House) was touched on. Bing and Kathryn had visited Petworth in 1966. Mention was made of the hospital in Baja, California which Bing and Kathryn had helped transform from a 'whorehouse'. It seems that when Bing had been in Ireland he had even recruited nuns to staff the new hospital. We learned that Bing's Rising River ranch has been sold to Clint Eastwood.

In discussing clothes, the suggestion was made that Bing was not interested in clothes and in responding Alan

Fisher agreed, but said that he looked good in them when he bothered to dress up. Kathryn said that she still had Bing's old vaudeville shirt which buttoned from the back. He would put his arms in, not button it up properly and then take it straight off when he left the stage so that it would be ready for his next performance. This was the time when he would be doing 4 performances a day. Incidentally, Kathryn mentioned that Bing always prepared well for a performance and would rehearse in the bedroom.

Alan Fisher used to open Bing's post for him and he mentioned the many letters Bing used to get from Leslie Gaylor. Kathryn asked how Leslie was and Jim Reilly said that he was not 100% so Kathryn sent her best wishes via Jim to him. I mentioned that I had seen both Priscilla Koernig and Gord Atkinson in recent months and again Kathryn asked me to pass on her regards. Alan also told of how he had found Bing working away late at night answering letters from his fans a few days before he died and in turn we told Alan about a letter which had been sent to us purporting to be one of Bing's last letters. The writing was not Bing's and we asked Alan if he had written it on Bing's behalf. Alan said that he never wrote letters on behalf of "Mr. Crosby".

Kathryn joked about her lack of culinary expertise on several occasions although she said that she was pretty good with the microwave. I asked if Bing was ever active in the kitchen and Alan Fisher replied "Well, he walked through it" but other than that he took no part in that particular part of the house. I wondered what happened when Bing was out on hunting trips and Alan suggested that he would be able to open a can of beans and pour them into a saucepan. Phil Harris was apparently an enthusiastic cook and no doubt would have supervised matters on his trips with Bing. Bing's ability to control his weight and his will power ("he could leave half of a biscuit") led Alan Fisher to say that Bing's recipe for anyone wanting to lose weight was "Back away from the groceries".

The custom at the Crosby home on Christmas Eve was for Kathryn and her mother and sister to prepare the meal for all the servants and their friends. Both Alan and Kathryn told us about these events when she and Bing would circulate from table to table during the evening.

Incidentally, the menu at Browns's Hotel was impressive and as a starter I had Smoked Scottish Salmon, spiced emulsion, sour cream and royal Oscietra caviar. My main course was Roast breast and confit leg of Challon duck, foie gras, creamed chard and Anna potato. Others around the table had Fillet of black Angus beef, salsify, wild mushrooms, and a sweet meal glaze. Kathryn did not have a main course but she had ice cream for dessert. All of the courses were presented most attractively and the food was of an excellent standard, so much so that Kathryn asked the chef to come into the room so that she could congratulate him.

(l to r) Back row: Peter McCoy, George O'Reilly, Jim Reilly, Lionel Pairpoint
Front row: Malcolm Macfarlane, Kathryn, Frank Brannigan, Ron Bosley

Presentations

At the conclusion of the meal, George O'Reilly rose to say a few words of appreciation to Kathryn and he then presented her with a book 'The Whoseday Book' in which Irish poets give a quote for each day of the year. Some of the poets had autographed their page of the book to Kathryn. Alan Fisher was also presented with a copy of the book. George then presented Kathryn with a magnificent Waterford cut glass Blue Bell vase which was from the people of Ireland in recognition of Bing's contribution to Irish Popular Music and Song and also for his contribution to entertainment generally in the twentieth century.

George O'Reilly presents Kathryn with a Waterford cut glass vase.

After these generous gifts and bearing in mind that conversation earlier had been of Faberge and precious items of pottery, it was with some temerity that I rose to thank Kathryn for the time and attention she had given us all and as a small token of our appreciation, I presented her with a gift from the ICC of a Royal Doulton piece depicting a ballet dancer. She appeared to be delighted with this saying that it was just how Mary Frances looked when she was taking ballet and she went on to say that she hoped that Mary Frances would have a daughter next time.

Frank Brannigan proposed a vote of thanks to George for making the evening possible and in this he mentioned that George's wife, Kate, had not been too well. On hearing this, Kathryn asked if she could speak to Kate on the phone and this was duly arranged with Kathryn speaking to both Kate and George's daughter, Mary.

At around 10:40 p.m., Kathryn left us having given us over 3 hours of stimulating conversation. She had posed for photographs with us all individually and as a group and she had kissed each one of us in turn, saying "It's an old Texas custom, it should not be taken as a commitment". All of you who have flown across the Atlantic will know of the problems of jet lag and it was amazing that Kathryn managed to keep going so well.

My own impression of Kathryn was that she was charming, shrewd and very professional. She is still very slim and attractive and no expense has been spared on her appearance. Kathryn has a very quick mind and the breadth of her knowledge on many subjects amazed me. She maintains very strong eye contact when talking to you. Over the years, Kathryn has had a mixed press and undoubtedly she is an enigma but as Crosby fans, we could not have asked more from her during the evening. As someone said, if we had met Bing himself he would not have given us the same time and attention. The bill for the evening is being shared between the six ICC members there and the next day we were all busily approaching our Bank Managers or getting our credit card limits increased to cover the situation. It was however worth every penny and everyone who attended would have said 'My Cup Runneth Over'.

What the Butler saw

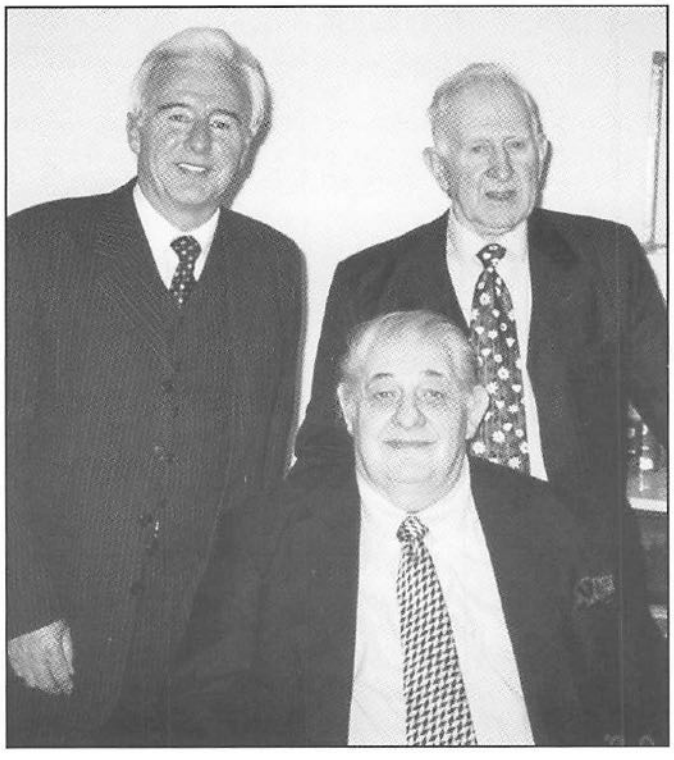
After Kathryn had gone to her room, Alan Fisher rejoined us and was interested to know a little more about us all. We each said where we came from and when I said that I was from Wilmslow, near Manchester, he told me that he had been born in the slums of Moss Side, Manchester. His mother had moved to Heald Green and Bing and Kathryn had visited her there in 1966. Alan said that he had been instrumental in getting Bing to perform in Manchester in 1977, as originally Bing had been going to appear in Birmingham. At the Manchester concert, Alan was invited to bring along 30 guests and they all had a memorable time.

He reminded us that he had not been a fan of Bing's singing and Bing knew this. At the Palladium concerts in 1977, Alan hurried out of the dressing room to the side of the stage so that he could watch Bing sing his closing medley and Bing noticed this just before he went on and said to Alan, "Don't tell me that you're becoming a fan". Alan said that it might well be the case, leading Bing to tell him that he had left it too late! Bing was dead a week later.

Whilst talking about the Palladium, Alan told us that many celebrities came round to see Bing in his dressing room and he gave one example. The actress Valerie Hobson wrote to Bing asking if they could perhaps go on for a meal after the show. Bing would not have gone on for a meal but as he had not replied to the letter, Alan nagged him to telephone Valerie about this. This Bing duly did and Valerie and her husband, John Profumo, visited Bing in his dressing room. Bing gave them a signed photo of himself and Valerie wrote him a charming letter of thanks.

Alan said that Bing was always incredibly good to his fans and if fans were coming from a distance to visit him but their arrival time was uncertain, Bing would go to his club but ask Alan to ring him there so that he could be back within 7 minutes to greet his visitors. Around the time of the Patty Hearst kidnap, the police found a list prepared by the kidnappers of their proposed targets. Bing's family was 4th. on the list and the local police

insisted that he install electric security gates. Bing was at first reluctant because he said that he wanted his fans to be able to walk up to his door and ring the bell if necessary. Eventually however, the police view prevailed.



Alan Fisher is flanked by Malcolm Macfarlane (left) and George O'Reilly (right).

In discussing Bing's health following the fall from the stage at Pasadena, Alan said that there had also been a cancer scare when the prognosis initially was poor but a further biopsy confirmed that this had been a mistake. Bing was however given a very large number of pills to take each day and he told both Kathryn and Alan that he needed someone to ensure that he took the pills on time but that he didn't trust either of them with this task. He said therefore he would ask Alan's wife, Norma, to take on the role which she did very efficiently apparently. Alan said that Kathryn must take the credit for getting Bing better after his fall. The hospital in Pasadena were keeping him in bed and he was not progressing. Kathryn arranged to get him flown back to a more local hospital where she could work with him to get him active again. He came home from hospital and Alan knew when he was feeling better when he started whistling around the house again. He would usually come down in the morning whistling a few bars which Alan used to hear and he would then arrange for Bing's breakfast to be served. When he started whistling his three bars again, Alan knew he was getting better. He mentioned that in the evenings Bing would sometimes ask Alan to fix him a drink. Bing drank very little and it was usually a different drink each time.

We could all have listened to Alan talking all night but buses and trains called and regretfully we had to take our leave of him saying that we looked forward to seeing him at Leeds.

Malcolm Macfarlane

'Open House with Gloria Hunniford'

Kathryn duly appeared on this Channel 5 TV chat show on November 25 when she was interviewed by Debbie Greenwood in the absence of the regular host. Debbie had apparently asked Kathryn if she wanted to know the questions in advance but she had said she would take them as they came.

Debbie gave her a nice build up as the wife of "the incredible Bing Crosby" and she also mentioned Kathryn's own film career showing a still from 'Anatomy of a Murder' in which she appeared with James Stewart. Debbie had attempted to greet Kathryn in Russian but Kathryn gently explained that Debbie had said "Goodbye" instead of "Hello" and Kathryn gave the correct words. Kathryn explained that she had learned Russian "as a dog learns to tap dance" and she described some of the background to her involvement with that country. Debbie asked if she would be spending Christmas there and Kathryn replied in the negative but the subject of Christmas enabled Debbie to introduce a clip of Bing singing 'White Christmas' from the 1972 Parkinson show. Debbie then said "Does it bring it all back?' and Kathryn said that it did, adding that Bing loved London. She recalled how they had done the 1977 Christmas Show here and then two weeks at the Palladium before he went to Spain, played golf, won $10 and then died. Kathryn then added "And now he has been made The Singer of the Century" in order to get Debbie to talk about the South Bank Show as had been previously agreed.

Unfortunately Debbie missed her cue and asked Kathryn "Was it love at first sight?" Kathryn talked about her first meeting with Bing and their unusual courtship leading Debbie to ask about the 30 year age difference. Kathryn replied that she could never keep up with Bing, even when he was recovering from kidney stone operations, he could out-drive her on the golf course. Debbie persisted on the age gap saying "He was old enough to be your Dad. Did you as a young girl think you were biting off more than you could chew?" Kathryn's response was that "ignorance is a great blessing" and she talked about their relationship in general stating that Bing "was a wonderful father". Debbie jumped in with "Was he terribly strict" and Kathryn dismissed this with "He was especially 'unstrict' - I was the Hitler in our home".

A picture of the young family with Bing and Kathryn was shown and Debbie mentioned that Mary Frances was the girl who shot JR in 'Dallas'. Kathryn told a nice story of how Kathryn's father complained that Mary Frances had not spent enough time shooting with him in Texas otherwise she would have finished JR off instead of wounding him! Kathryn expressed her pride in her daughter and her grandson.

Debbie pointed out that Kathryn had a career of her own before she married Bing and did she feel resentful that she had had to put this on hold?. Kathryn said no, "a baby is for 20 years, not for the romance tonight and the conception tomorrow" and she went on to talk a little more about her life with Bing. Debbie then tried to wind up the conversation but Kathryn interrupted quickly to plug the South Bank Show leading Debbie to

give the relevant details.

The next item on the show was Anne Stirk cooking Pecan Pie and Mile High Key Lime Pie in honour of Thanksgiving Day and much to my surprise, bearing in mind Kathryn's disparaging remarks about her own cooking, Debbie asked Kathryn to come and join her and Anne in the kitchen area. Kathryn dealt with this very professionally and chatted knowledgeably about the two dishes as she whisked the Pecan Pie mixture. All in all it was a very professional appearance by Kathryn which gave good publicity to Bing. I especially liked Kathryn's reference to Bing not being a strict father because we do need to keep resurrecting Bing's real image and dissipating the damage of Gary Crosby's book.

That night, after the show, Kathryn was entertained by Universal Music (owners of the MCA and Decca labels) in London and the following day she flew on to Russia. All in all, it was a most productive visit.

'This Morning'

Kathryn returned during December and on December 13, she was one of the guests on the Granada TV daytime show 'This Morning' which is presented each weekday by the husband and wife team of Richard Madeley and Judy Finnegan.

A nice introduction featuring clips from 'White Christmas' was followed by Judy saying that Bing was "American royalty" and that he was to be featured in the South Bank Show on December 26. She then welcomed Kathryn who read a quote from Professor Steven Schoenherr which finished with the words "the man who has had the greatest impact on the mass media in the 20th century is Bing Crosby." Richard joined in and said that Bing was held in great affection in the UK but in the USA, he was probably close to royalty. Kathryn replied that Bing was not very royal but he was loved by everyone and that at one time every woman in the USA wanted to marry him. She went on to tell how she first met and married him.

In a reference to a forthcoming clip from 'High Society', Kathryn was asked if Bing and Frank Sinatra were pals and she replied that "they got along very well, Frank was a little bit younger than Bing." Richard said that he had read that Frank was the first pop star but in fact it was Bing who should have that description to which Kathryn agreed. The clip of Bing and Frank singing part of 'Well Did You Evah' followed and then Richard asked "If Bing was here now, what would he say was his greatest achievement?" Kathryn replied, "Oh, I have no idea, but he loved 'High Society' and working with Grace, Frank and Louis Armstrong."

'White Christmas' their favourite musical

Richard said that 'White Christmas' was the couple's favourite musical and he picked out the relationship between Bing and Danny Kaye in the film. Kathryn also highlighted the liaison with Rosemary Clooney in the movie saying that arising from this, Rosie and Kathryn had been lifetime friends. She joked that Bing and Rosie should have married because they worked closely together on a daily radio show and their voices blended so well. Richard mentioned the incredibly slim waist of Vera Ellen but Kathryn brought him back to the subject of Bing by relating how she had visited the set of 'White Christmas' with some friends and that Bing had made them very welcome.

Richard asked if Bing had that special aura, glow or magnetic ray that some stars have and Kathryn said that he was not high profile but "he had a low profile magnetic ray." She went on to say how Bing was known for his religion and his love of his family which led Judy to come in with "He was very loving with his second family but he must have regretted terribly what happened with his first family."

Kathryn quickly responded, "I don't think that's quite accurate and if you read recent stories that Phil, the only remaining son from the first marriage, has put out, he always felt that they were well treated." She went on to describe how Bing took the boys to the ranch each year and taught them all to play golf. She explained that Bing's mother used to live with them and to her things were either right or wrong and never in between and this would have influenced Bing.

Kathryn on 'This Morning' with Richard and Judy.

Kathryn was asked if she had seen the forthcoming South Bank Show and she indicated that she had not but she was really looking forward to it as "Lord Bragg does very good specials". This led into a brief discussion about titles such as 'Lord' or 'Earl' before Kathryn produced Roger Osterholm's book 'Bing Crosby: A Bio-Bibliography' saying that she had just discovered it. She said that it was "amazing the quality of the people who have devoted their life to Bing." Judy and Richard thanked Kathryn for being their guest and another very professional appearance by Kathryn was completed.

HELLO magazine

The December 21, 1999 edition of this UK published magazine contained a five page article headed **"Bing Crosby's Widow Kathryn - breaking her silence 22 years after the crooner's death and setting the record straight".**

No less than nine photographs supported the text which started with some background and then lead into the interviewer asking Kathryn how she met Bing and how she felt in the early years of the marriage.

The interviewer then talked about Gary Crosby's book which gave Kathryn the chance to refute the claims that Bing was a cruel father and also go on to talk about the suicides of Dennis and Lindsay. She also told about a tumour in her breast which was found to be benign and then about another tumour which wasn't which led to Kathryn having surgery. She described how Bing was very supportive at that time. The final question was 'Why did you never remarry?' to which Kathryn replied:

> "It's not true that there's no one who could come up to Bing. There are plenty of wonderful men out there. I did meet one who had stature, position and looked like Leslie Howard. He also had an 11-year-old daughter who was going to hate me come what may because she'd had her daddy all to herself until then. I'd been there and got the T-shirt that said 'don't be a fool'. I use my energies in other ways now and carry on Bing's work, but I'm just another Crosby volunteer."

This was an interesting article with nice photographs of Kathryn and Bing.

The VIP Suite

Kathryn's final publicity appearance for Bing and the South Bank Show was on a radio programme called 'The VIP Suite' which was put out by the Irish radio station RTE during the morning of December 26. The programme had been recorded in London and for nearly an hour Kathryn chatted with Gloria Hunniford. Their discussion was broken up by several of Bing's records and those played were 'White Christmas', 'The Second Time Around', 'Galway Bay' (from 'A Little Bit of Irish'), 'My Cup Runneth Over' (from the Palladium) and 'That's What Life is All About'

Gloria was very knowledgeable about Crosby matters and certainly conveyed the impression that she was a fan of Bing's. Kathryn again talked about how she met Bing during the making of 'White Christmas' and their long-running courtship when she eventually played 'hard-to-get' and got her man. The details of the wedding were described. Kathryn spoke about how much the song 'The Second Time Around' meant to her. Her conversion to Catholicism from Methodism, Bing's religious faith and Bing's Irish connection were all covered. George O'Reilly's 'A Little Bit of Irish' show was recalled and Kathryn talked about singing with Bing. Her time as a nurse, Bing and Bob and so on, the conversation flowed easily. Kathryn linked each of the records very nicely, particularly 'My Cup Runneth Over' and 'That's What Life is All About'. The South Bank Show was comprehensively plugged with much stress on Bing being 'The Voice of the Century'. Gloria asked about Kathryn's children and about Bing's death and funeral. Kathryn talked smoothly about these subjects and overall it was a very warm and friendly interview.

During her visits to the UK, Kathryn certainly worked hard to promote the South Bank Show and the publicity generated for Bing was excellent. I have written to her and thanked her on behalf of the ICC.

Malcolm Macfarlane

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Arthur Blood, 597 Osmaston Rd., Derby DE24 8NE

Arthur now has available the new Bing Crosby Millennium stamp at £3 per 20 inclusive of postage to UK members. USA members can order from Wig Wiggins. price $5 for 20. Other stamps also available as shown.

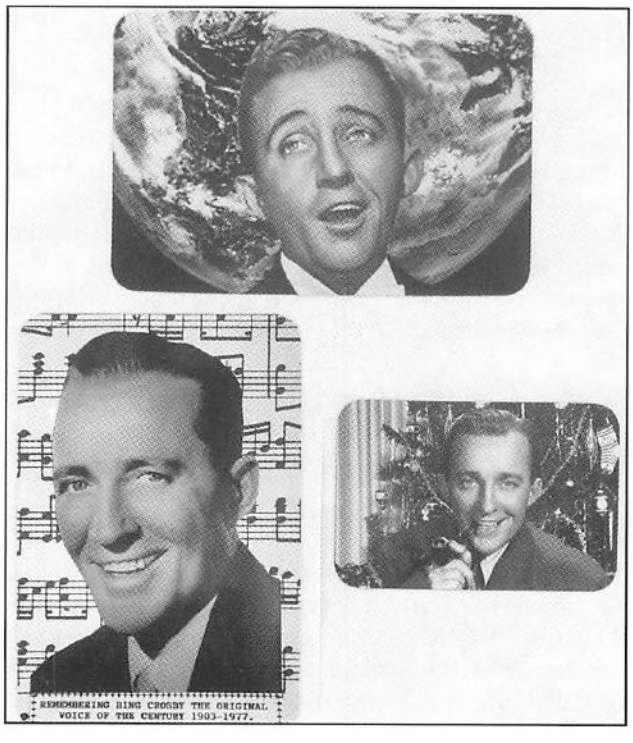
Alf Ward, 112 Commonside, Sheffield, S. Yorks S10 1GG (Tel. 0114 2687991)

ALL FREE

BING magazines and calendars from early 1970s. These must be collected and please phone before calling. A must for any new member.

Mrs. D.B. Holmes, 9 Ashbourne Avenue, Whetstone, London N20 0AL (tel: 0181-361-0644)

"I sadly lost my husband in August after a seven year battle against prostate cancer. He was a great Crosby fan since childhood, and had a great CD and tape collection. Among some of my most treasured memories are the times we saw Bing and his family at the London Palladium. He had quite a collection of 78 records (list enclosed), I have no means of playing 78 records now and will have to dispose of them. Would any of your members be interested? If so they can contact me, with offers on the above number, I believe the records to be in good condition."



(Editor: The list gives details of 53 Bing 78s [48 Brunswick, 5 Columbia] plus a number of Gene Kelly 78s on the MGM label. Any one interested, please contact Mrs. Holmes direct.)

Bert Bishop, Tideway, 100 Imperial Avenue, Maylandesae, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 6AJ

Bing CDs from the collection of the late Geoff Block are available from Bert. Write to him for details.

Stan Woodford, 6 Mariam Gardens, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 6QA (tel. 01708 445049)

Stan has on offer many VHS (UK format) video items and film song compilations of Bing that may be of interest. SAE for lists please.

Norman Press, 143 Cauldwell Hall Rd., Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 5BS (tel. 01473 719761)

Printed note paper with the famous Bing logo + your address and telephone number.

200 A5 sheets blue laid paper and 100 C6 envelopes to match at the inclusive price of £38. Cheques and P.O.s only

Thomas Mark, April Cottage, 2 Crofters Fold, Galgate, Lancaster LA2 0RB

"I am looking for sheet music / lyrics for quite simply any of Bing's work - early or late - literally anything from the master's archive will do. Apart from 'White Christmas' my interest in Bing's work came after my purchase of your very own Jim Reilly's 'Memories' compilation album - so any music / lyrics from that golden 26 would be particularly fantastic."

Could we ask for anyone with sheet music to spare, to contact Thomas direct.

The Record Centre, 45-46 Loveday St., Birmingham B4 6NR (tel. 0121-359-7399)

Ray Purslow and his team are real supporters of the Crosby cause and for your Crosby CDs (and LPs), contact Ray. You can do it all by phone and pay by credit card if you like. It couldn't be easier.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

The following are available from Michael:

"Bing Crosby on Compact Disc", A5 soft bound - with details of the vast majority of Bing's CDs. An invaluable reference book. 155 pages. £10.45

"Bing Crosby - the illustrated biography" - Michael Freedland's hardback biography. Available to club members at a specially reduced price. 127 pages, £13.

"Bing Crosby - a Diary of a Lifetime" - A5 hardback, a definitive look at events in Bing's life - beautifully illustrated. 96 pages, £12.

"BING magazine" - back issues of numbers 94, 95, 101, 104, 106, 107, 108, 110, 118-122 available. £2 each.

BING BINDERS

Keep your magazines in mint condition by storing them in these specially made binders. They have blue covers with BING in gold on the spine and hold 10 copies, which allow them to either be inserted or removed, yet also open flat for easy reading. Costing £6.99 inc postage, £7.99 to Europe, £8.99 elsewhere, they are available from Ken Mason, 12 Wycomb Grove, Melton Mowbray, Leics. LE13 1EQ

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Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,
Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 236 Andrieux St., Sonoma, California 95476-6909, USA (tel. 707 996 0257 - e-mail Erinssmile@earthlink.net - Web Site address http://home.earthlink.net/~erinssmile/

Club Crosby, BINGANG
Wayne L. Martin, Editor
435 So. Holmes Ave., Kirkwood, Missouri 63122, USA
(e-mail: ClubCrosby@aol.com)
(Members in Europe should enrol via Ken Crossland, 9 Arden Drive, Dorridge, Solihull, B93 8LP)

The Victorian Bing Crosby Society
Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130.

Internet sites:

Bing Crosby Internet Museum:
www.kcmetro.cc.mo.us/~crosby/

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby
http://www.geocities.com/crissi_n/bing.html

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OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

Sinatra Music Society, 183 Summerfields Avenue, Halesowen, West Midlands B62 9NU (phone:0121-421-7714) This Society produces a most impressive magazine on a bi-monthly basis and includes features on all artistes performing quality popular music. The annual sub for UK members is £12 and write to Des Davis at the above address for details. Web site address: www.sinatra-ms.com

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 13 Sunnyside, Heckmondwike, W. Yorks WF16 0LN

Pat Boone Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 63, Sunderland, SR1 1PN

The Doris Day Society, 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX

The Al Jolson Society, c/o Richard Selwood, 5 Abbotsfield, Wiveliscombe, Somerset TA4 2SU

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email:tony@flias.globalnet.co.uk)

The Dean Martin Association, P. O. Box 80, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 1ZR

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KEITH PARKINSON'S
CELLULOID CROSBY

I've made an attempt to keep track of all the films released where Bing's voice is heard on the soundtrack. My last update was in BING 111 in December of 1995. Now that the 1990s are over it's time to bring the list up to date with all the Crosby soundtrack contributions for that decade.

Grumpy Old Men (1993) This Warner Bros. film includes a Christmas song from a Crosby Warner Bros. album. "Winter Wonderland" was one of thirteen songs leased by Crosby's Project Records to Warners some thirty years before this Jack Lemmon - Walter Matthau comedy was released to cinemas. About three quarters of the way through the film comes a scene taking place on Christmas Eve, 1992. Bing's recording of "Winter Wonderland" is played over a familiar urban snow scene and the audience expects a warm domestic sequence to unfold. Instead a serious note is struck as we watch a fraught incident surrounding the failing marriage of Jack Lemmon's daughter, played by Darryl Hannah. Up until that moment the film has been built on the comedic interplay between veterans Matthau and Lemmon. The feel good effect of Bing's singing plays counter to the disharmony of a marriage on the rocks.

Trapped in Paradise (1994) This is almost a season comedy. It's set at Christmas but it isn't particularly funny. A 20th Century-Fox film starring Nicholas Cage, it is mainly set in the town of Paradise, USA That town's citizens are trusting, unsophisticated individuals and the town's bank is just waiting for a robbery to happen. Cage and his two brothers visit it for the first time on Christmas Eve. In the relaxed atmosphere of the banking hall customers are treated to Bing's 1963 recording of "Do You Hear What I Hear" over the bank's public address system. If you want to know what happens next, the robbery succeeds, the escape is bungled and the brothers reform in the film's last reel.

The Troubles We've Seen (1994) A French documentary fully noted in BING 111. Bing's recording of "Song of Freedom" is heard.

Mother Night (1996) Michael Collins covered this thriller in the "One Sweet Letter From You" section of BING 117. He identifies the version of "White Christmas" used in the film as Bing's 1947 re-recording for Decca.

L.A. Confidential (1997) A thriller from Warner Bros. which proves once again how a Crosby Christmas record can provide instant atmosphere. In this case, however, the playing of 'Mele Kalikimaka" by Bing and the Andrews Sisters is at odds with the thirty second dramatic scene which plays out on screen. The film's plot is based on James Ellroy's semi-fictional novel about the murder of his mother and the investigation of corruption in Los Angeles by three detectives. The time is the 1950s. About twenty minutes into the film the story takes Kim Basinger and one of the cops on the case into a liquor store. Bing and the Andrews Sisters do their best to spread good cheer in a scene in which violence wins the day.

I Know What You Did Last Summer (1997) This one I haven't seen and it's thanks to Bert Bishop's "Bing on the Box" article in the last issue that I learned that Bing's recording of "Beautiful Girl" was used on the soundtrack. I saw several clips from this picture when it was released in the UK and I didn't seem to match the film's target audience. That probably accounts for its box office popularity because it spawned a sequel.

The Talented Mr. Ripley (1999)

Again I haven't seen this one yet, but I understand that in one scene when Matt Damon (who plays 'Ripley') is looking at himself in a mirror, Bing can be heard singing 'May I'.

The Best of Van Dyke Parks !

A snatch of the title song from the 1936 film *Pennies From Heaven* turned up most unexpectedly. I saw a CD entitled "Idiosyncratic path: The best of Van Dyke Parks". Would you give it a second look? What if track 16 was called "Bing Crosby"? So I bought it. The song "Bing Crosby" was written by Parks and recorded in 1972 for inclusion on an album "Discover America". It opens with the lyric, "Of all the world's famous singers I've ever seen on the movie screen..." and then goes on to pay tribute to Bing. Parks compares Bing to the likes of Nelson Eddy, Donald Novis, Kenny Baker and Rudy Vallee. Not exactly overwhelming competition but at least it shows that Parks knows his movie history. The song continues and we learn that "Bing has a way of singing with his heart and soul" before we are treated to a sample of the Crosby whistle prior to a chorus of "Pennies From Heaven" which is interpolated with the song's lyric. Parks was born in 1941 and his songwriting has gone through many phases from writing for Bobby Vee to collaborating with the Beach Boys and then producing the Esso Trinidadian Steel Band. That band appeared with him on the "Discover America" album and "Bing Crosby" has a Caribbean feel to it which wouldn't make it out of place on a Harry Belafonte calypso album. The song is a curious, heart felt tribute to Bing which passed unnoticed at a time when Bing was entering the final productive years of his career.

Say One For Me

Do you regard *Say One For Me* as a modern Crosby picture? I do, but when you carry out the necessary mental subtraction it's now well past its fortieth birthday. It doesn't look its age compared to the better received Bing films because it has production values not associated with his peak years' output. These include colour, CinemaScope and Sammy Cahn writing the lyrics to the tunes of James Van Heusen instead of Johnny Burke. Although Burke was only aged fifty when *Say One For Me* went before the cameras he was in semi-retirement. He'd last written specifically for a Crosby film five years previously when he collaborated with Van Heusen on three songs for *Little Boy Lost.* Burke died in 1964. By

then he had forsaken Hollywood and one of his last achievements was writing the book for "Donnybrook", a not too successful stage musical which opened in 1961. Bing still had clout in 1958 and it was at his request that Cahn and Van Heusen wrote the musical numbers for *Say One For Me*. Perhaps the real clinker from their resultant score was "The night rock 'n' roll died (Almost)". That was supposed to be sung by Judy Harriett in the film in her part as the dancer June January. But Miss Harriet's voice was considered too poor even for that song and she mimed to the vocal by Rosemary June. Looking back now over four decades, three of the songs are not at all bad. "Say One For Me" never made it as a standard but it has that feel to it. "I Couldn't Care Less" was typical of the fifties ballads that Bing was fond of, even though they had no potential as best sellers, and "The Secret of Christmas" was an O.K. non-traditional Christmas song. (For instance, "The Secret of Christmas" has a lasting appeal absent from the ten songs Bing recorded in 1970/71 for his Daybreak album "A Time to be Jolly".) As the Crosby discographies tell us, Bing made a first attempt at making studio recordings of that trio of *Say One For Me* songs early in March of 1958 with Percy Faith providing orchestral backing. They remained unissued and it was Frank De Vol's recordings of March 25th which were issued. The soundtrack album of *Say One For Me* is hard to come by but at least you are saved from hearing non-Bing renditions of the Cahn - Van Heusen gems "You Can't Love 'Em All", "The Girl Most Likely to Succeed" and "Chico's Choo-choo". Bing selected the best of the Cahn - Van Heusen bunch for his own vocals.

The film had been offered to him in the spring of 1958. 20th Century-Fox owned the property and had already assigned the directorial chore to Frank Tashlin. Frank Sinatra was committed to Fox and at that stage he was to play the Tony Vincent role eventually passed to Robert Wagner. The studios preferred to use artistes already under contract. The late fifties saw the final studio contractees working out their commitments. Earlier in the decade, Tashlin and Wagner had also signed on the dotted line with 20th Century-Fox along with Sinatra. The Holly LaMaise part eventually played by Debbie Reynolds was intended for Polly Bergen whose singing voice was more assured than Debbie's. Then, because the LaMaise character was also required to dance, Barrie Chase was pencilled in. Her C.V. included partnering Fred Astaire. But part of the deal Bing had with Fox allowed him to have a say as to his leading lady and it may well have been the Crosby casting vote that resulted in Debbie Reynolds working with him.

20th Century-Fox studio became Bing's ongoing contact with Hollywood following the last film he made under his Paramount contract in 1955. *Anything Goes*, released in the spring of 1956, ended a more or less continuous relationship with Paramount which officially started with *The Big Broadcast* in 1932. In 1956 and 1957 Bing made two films for MGM but it was Fox which saw him serve out his time in the film capitol. *High Time* followed *Say One For Me* and in 1965 the remake of *Stagecoach* effectively ended his film career. Bing also made a bid to appear in *Tender is the Night*, which Fox filmed in 1960 with Jason Robards jnr. playing the part for which Bing was considered to be too old. The film was based on a story by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald was in a relationship for a time with gossip columnist Sheilah Graham. She wrote a book about her experiences with

'Father Conroy' meets 'Tony Vincent'

the author called "Beloved Infidel" and sold the film rights to Fox. At the time Bing was available to Fox but they chose to cast Gregory Peck as Fitzgerald. Graham called the resultant fim "dreadful" and called Peck's acting unbelievable. She gave Bing the backhanded compliment of his career when she stated: 'Even Bing Crosby would have been better."

When filming of *Say One for Me* started at the beginning of 1959 Bing had been married to Kathryn for just over one year. Her Hollywood acting career was gradually winding down. The Crosby's had organised their film commitments to run in tandem and whilst Bing was working on the Fox lot Kathryn was over at M-G-M filming *The Big Circus*. Bing's attitude to showbusiness had changed perceptively as far as family life and bringing up children was concerned and he was much influenced by Kathryn. She wanted to spend time with the second Crosby family and she scheduled her acting commitments to work alongside Bing from time to time. She had already made her radio debut with Bing on the regular annual "A Christmas sing with Bing" programme. She switched to television for "Hollywood Palace" appearances and the whole family contributed to the television film "Goldilocks" in 1969. The following decade she was joining Bing on stage as part of his act. This invariably included duetting on "True Love". Her singing voice can be placed in the same category as Grace Kelly, the original Crosby "True Love" partner. Kathryn also became protective of Bing. Michael ffolkes revealed in his autobiography just how she overshadowed Bing on occasion. ffolkes accompanied journalist David Taylor so that he could caricature Bing to illustrate a magazine article. But Taylor was instructed to confine the discussion to "Mrs. Crosby". Bing stood about twenty feet away and ffolkes managed to draw him into the discussion by making a remark about llya Nastase which brought Bing over. Even so, the balance of the interview made itself known from the cartoon which was eventually published with Taylor's piece.

Say One For Me is a Crosby film which is not held in very high regard by most of us. And you'd be hard pressed to find a critic who enjoyed reviewing it. Leonard Maltin called it "terribly contrived; no memorable music", five words which seemed to echo the lengthier reviews of the time. But the most bizarre review I have encountered was written the night the film received a gala benefit premiere in Hollywood on June 19th, 1959. The Hollywood Citizen News review the following day was put together by a reporter who must have been told that every cent of advertising revenue was needed by the newspaper and not to be unkind. And if it was necessary to be uncomplimentary he was not to make the panning too obvious. Hiding behind the initials L.E.R. he wrote:

> *For visual appeal, this new 20th Century-Fox film, in color and CinemaScope, is a world beater. The costumes, sets, color-camera craftsmanship and backgrounds are a treat for sore eyes, as the adage goes. A handsome production from start to finish, it misses only in the departments of story, direction and acting, three important categories, nonetheless.*

Keith Parkinson

Connecticut Yankee at MOMI

London's Museum of the Moving Image held a medieval season in March and as part of this, Bing's film 'A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court' was to be shown on March 29. Several members planned to attend and we may have a brief report in the next magazine. Nice to see that Bing has not been forgotten by the Museum.

Bing Crosby - the man and the music swing again

John Wall from Melbourne, Australia wrote to give us details of a major event 'Bing Crosby - the man and the music swing again' at the Spray Farm Summer Festival in Melbourne featuring Ignatius Jones and Australia's All Star Big Band. It took place on January 30 and the audience was treated to 40 of Bing's No. 1 hits as well as tributes to Fred Astaire and Dorothy Lamour. Ignatius Jones is described as a lifetime fan of Bing's and has a voice that apparently bears an uncanny resemblance to the Master. We must enrol him as a member - anyone know where to contact him?

The event was also mentioned by Girvan Patterson in his letter in BING 123 when it was thought that Carol Lawrence was going to take part.

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

KORNMAN, MARY (1917-1973)

Actress. She made three in a row with Bing in 1933: *Please*, *Just An Echo* and *College Humor*. The first two were short films and in both of them it is a motor car which brings her to the attention of her leading man - Bing. In *Please* Bing comes to her aid when her car breaks down and in *Echo* she smokes a cigarette in her car until forest ranger Crosby drives up. By the time she made these films she was a screen veteran having spent the previous ten years as the only girl in the "Our Gang" series of comedies. She retired in 1940 without making an impact in feature films. Titles such as *Queen of the Jungle* (1935) and *Swing It Professor* (1937) say it all.

Bing attempts to woo Mary Kornman in 'Please'

KRASNA, NORMAN (1909-1984)

Screenwriter. His Bing link is his collaboration with Melvin Frank and Norman Panama on the script of *White Christmas* (1954) and his solo writing effort on *Let's Make Love* (1960). His forte was comedy and he received an Academy Award for *Princess O'Rourke* (1943), which he also directed. His first on screen credit was for *Hollywood Speaks* in 1932 and his last for *I'd Rather Be Rich* in 1964.

KURI, EMILE (1907-) Set decorator. Not a specialist skill one encounters outside the movies. Kuri deserves mention because he won an Academy Award twice for set decoration: *The Heiress* (1949) and *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* (1954). Both Oscars were earned around the time he was running down his work with Paramount before joining Walt Disney. He was partly responsible for the sets used for the first Bing film to which he was assigned. That was *Top o' the Morning* (1949) when he shared credit with Sam Comer. By the time of Bing's follow up Paramount picture - *Riding High* (1949) he had no collaborator and he worked alone on *Here Comes the Groom* two years later before being given two of his most memorable assignments for that studio. They were *War of the Worlds* and *Shane*, both released in 1953. By the mid-fifties he was working exclusively with Disney on such demanding projects as The *Absent Minded Professor* (1961) and *Mary Poppins* (1964). His last work was on Disney's *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (1971).

LA RUE, JACK (1903-1984) Actor. The name may mean little but the face will register immediately. He played the villainous Le Bec in *Road to Utopia* (filmed 1944) and the equally unsavoury Tomatoes in *Robin and the 7 Hoods* twenty years later. He was also in *My Favourite Brunette* (1947), a Bob Hope picture in which Bing made a gag appearance. In that one La Rue played a thug called Tony. By now you will have placed him. His grim visage branded him a bit part gangster from his debut in *Lady Killer* (1934) to his last role in *Won Ton Ton* (1976).

LADD, ALAN (1913-1964) Actor. A good question for the Crosbyana edition of Trivial Pursuits is 'Which major Hollywood star was in four Bing Crosby pictures without appearing with him on screen in any of them?" Alan Ladd was one of many victims of Paramount's policy to assemble all star

bills in order to show off their roster of talent which proved once and for all that more is less when it comes to overloaded cast lists. Ladd's apprenticeship days were behind him when he was featured in *Star Spangled Rhythm* (1942), *Duffy's Tavern* (1944), *Hollywood Victory Caravan* (1945) and *Variety Girl* (1947). By the time the last one was released he'd been in pictures for fifteen years and a star for five. He shot to fame in 1942 with *This Gun For Hire* followed by *The Glass Key*. He was an unlikely hero at 5 ft. 5 in. but with the use of trenches and orange boxes he managed to hold his own against various leggy leading ladies and assorted toughs for most of his career. He was with Bing's studio until the mid-fifties and he never surpassed his performance in Paramount's *Shane* (1953). That was when his star started to slip. He came to the UK when he left Paramount and made a couple of undistinguished actioners in 1954: *The Red Beret* and *The Black Knight*. An even worse move was to make a film in Italy in 1961 *(Duel of Champions)*. By then he knew his career was almost over. His last screen appearance was in *The Carpetbaggers*, released in 1964, the year he died. By that time his looks had suffered because of his descent into alcohol and drugs. There had been a probable suicide attempt the previous year and the overdose of sedatives which killed him seemed to be premeditated.

LAEMMLE, CARL (1867-1939) Motion picture pioneer and producer. Laemmle was head of Universal when he produced *King of Jazz* (1930). By then he had been producing films for over twenty years. Movies were a growth industry and Laemmle's Universal studio turned out product so fast that most of his family both near and distant found themselves on the payroll working in some executive capacity. Hence the Ogden Nash couplet, "Uncle Carl Laemmle had a very large faemmle." His fortunes started to wane shortly after *King of Jazz*, mainly due to the depression which affected all of Hollywood for a time. In 1935 he sold the studio for $5 million.

LAKE, VERONICA (1919-1973) Actress. Born Constance Frances Marie Ockelman. It is no coincidence that Paramount used Veronica Lake in the same capacity as Alan Ladd in *Star Spangled Rhythm* (1942), *Duffy's Tavern* (1944) and *Variety Girl* (1947). They went through a phase of cramming all their contract players into virtually plotless films during the movie hungry mid-forties. Like Ladd she made a fourth film to which Bing contributed. That was *Out of This World* (1945), where she was Eddie Bracken's leading lady in a film which utilised the Crosby voice. She co-starred with Ladd in his first two major successes for Paramount - *This Gun for Hire* and *The Glass Key*. Her career went into decline before Ladd's and by the end of the 1940s her significant period was over. Three low budget films were made over the next twenty years and, like Ladd, she sought solace in the bottle. She was found working as a barmaid in New York in the early 1960s and the resultant publicity led to her moving to England where she wrote "Veronica", a fairly entertaining autobiography. She summed herself up when she wrote, "You could put all the talent I had into your left eye and still not suffer from impaired vision".

LAMOUR, DOROTHY (1914-1996) Actress and singer. Born Mary Leta Dorothy Kaumeyer. Unlike Ladd and Lake, her star continued to shine in her public and private life up until the time of her death. Her Crosby films and the roles she took are *Road to Singapore* (1940) as Mima, *Road to Zanzibar* (1941) as Donna Latour, *Road to Morocco* (1942) as Princess Shalmar, *Dixie* (1943) as Millicent Cook, *Road to Utopia* (1944) as Sal, *Road to Rio* (1948) as Lucia Maria de Andrade, *Road to Bali* (1953) as Princess Lalah McTavish and *The Road to Hong Kong* (1962) as herself. Because she was a Paramount contract star she was unable to escape from being seen in the 1940s collages *Star Spangled Rhythm, Duffy's Tavern* and *Variety Girl,* all of which featured Bing. Plus, in the "hardly a Bing picture" category, *My Favourite Brunette* (1947) and *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952). And finally she showed up in *Here Comes the Groom* (1951) to join in the chorus of 'Misto Cristofo Columbo". In her pre-Hollywood period she was crowned Miss New Orleans in 1931 and then entered show business as a singer. In the 1980s Deja Vu issued an LP with twenty examples of her vocals and had she not made the transition to acting she could have remained in the public eye as a ballad singer. As it was, her first film, *The Jungle Princess* (1936), shot her to stardom and she was seldom out of a sarong until she showed she was adept at light comedy as foil to Bing and Bob in the Road series. She more or less retired from films in the early 1960s, although there were three ill advised returns to the sound stages in *Pajama Party* (1964), *The Phynx* (1970) and *Creepshow 2* (1987).

LAND AROUND US, THE Song. Specially written for the 1954 film *The Country Girl* by Ira Gershwin and Harold Arlen the song is also the name of the Broadway play in which Bing is to make his comeback. We see Bing perform the song during the show's dress rehearsal. As with the other three songs written for the film by Gershwin and Arlen I am unaware of any other vocalist tackling the number on record.

LANE, BURTON (1912-) Songwriter. Lane wrote the music to just one Crosby film song. Ralph Freed provided the words. That was the catchy "Smarty" from the 1937 film *Double or Nothing*. Lane was just making his mark as a composer, his film song debut having been for *Dancing Lady* (1934). He was capable of writing both words and music although some of his best work has been with other lyricists. Bing sang several Lane songs over the years and his interpretation of Lane's collaboration with Frank Loesser for "Finian's Rainbow" are well suited to the Crosby voice. Lane's work was rarely second rate. His last major success was with Alan Jay Lerner on the Broadway hit which became a Hollywood film: "On a clear day you can see forever".

LANG, CHARLES B. (1902-1998) Director of photography. Lang's camera work was behind half a dozen Crosby pictures. He worked on *We're Not Dressing* (1934), She *Loves Me Not* (1934), *Mississippi* (1935), *Doctor Rhythm* (1938), *Here Come the WAVES* (1944) and *Blue Skies* (1945). On the last one he shared credit with William Snyder. He entered films as a laboratory assistant at Paramount in the early 1920s and by 1926 he had his first assignment when he was co-photographer on *The Nightpatrol*. He remained with Paramount until 1952 when his freelance work allowed him to photograph an increasing number of films in colour. However, his best work is considered to be subtle black and white photography and his only Academy Award was for the 1933 version of *A Farewell to Arms*. He was on top form until his retirement at seventy. He always worked on class A productions, his last two films being *Butterflies are Free* (1972) and *40 Carats* (1973).

LANG, EDDIE [Salvatore Massaro] (1902-1933) Guitarist, whose artistry is heard on the soundtracks of *King of Jazz* (1930) and *The Big Broadcast* (1932). He accompanied Bing on "Please" in the latter (with Stuart Erwin on piano). He was a significant figure during Bing's early solo years and the two were close personal colleagues following a friendship which occurred when both were on the Whiteman payroll. The two worked together on radio and recordings until Lang's unfortunate death following a routine tonsillectomy.

LANGDON, HARRY (1884-1944). Actor. In issue number 7 of the 1933 short series *Hollywood on Parade*

Langdon is seen in a brief comedy sketch with Bing and John Barrymore which is set on the golf course. He never made a successful transition from silent pictures where at one time he was held in high regard alongside Chaplin, Keaton and Lloyd. Several studies on his artistry have been published over the years and all conclude that he was a victim of his ego. Whatever the reason for his fall from fame he soon became out of touch with public taste and in 1931 declared himself bankrupt.

BING CROSBY - THE VOICE OF THE CENTURY

From its ET-type, animated montage beginnings to the simplicity of the credits fade, The South Bank Show, whilst seeking to educate and inform, has always been a prestigious, arty type of programme aimed, primarily, at the cognoscente of whichever branch of the arts and entertainment the subject was connected. However, considerable advanced publicity should have ensured a wider than usual audience falling, as it did, on Boxing Day evening, albeit rather late. But, nobody goes to bed early at Christmas time, surely! Transmitted at 11.10 p.m. on ITV, the programme reached all of Britain via the different regions' commercial stations. Regularly hosted by Melvyn Bragg, the Landseer Production was produced and directed by Derek Bailey for London Weekend Television and was edited and presented by Lord Bragg who, no doubt, delighted our own collective cognoscente by bestowing on Bing the title that heads this revue. Though Bing would, I'm sure, have been far more comfortable with the alternative appellation, 'The Old Groaner' and would have shied away from any suggestion of significant eminence. But even he might have been hard put to play down the incredible impact he had during a century of highs and lows in just about every field of the entertainment industry. An industry that sought to provide an uplifting antidote to years of political aggression and social upheaval. Could such a story be illustrated in fifty minutes? Hardly; but most would agree that this special profile had a damn good try.

In promoting Bing's enormous contribution to popular culture Dr. Steve Schoenherr, Professor of the Media History at the University Of San Diego dismissed centuries of inventors and scientists and opened the proceedings by saying:

> *"The man who was the greatest influence on the mass media in the Twentieth Century was not a scientist or an inventor. He was a crooner. His name was Bing Crosby."*

It was an impressive start to a frank and informative programme that sought to put into perspective every aspect of Bing's remarkable life and the impact he had on practically every contemporary artiste worthy of note.

As biographer and jazz critic Gary Giddins was to remark, for twenty years Bing "utterly dominated American entertainment, and nobody had as many hit records. Sinatra and Elvis don't come close; and he was the only major figure in the history of popular music who had a classical education; he cared about words and language."

Enough was described and illustrated of Bing's first two decades from birth to give evidence of the domestic inputs that helped shape his life, and in tracing the early years of the Crosby saga the programme touched on his Gonzaga education and the unique, Crosby museum there. Father Robert Spitzer, President of that University, noted that Bing's schooling was "a culture that surrounded not just Jesuit education, but Catholic education - a moral rectitude. A sense of conviction that comes out in the way he sings."

The programme was liberally illustrated with excerpts from films and television; with interpolating voice-overs and interviews of Ken Barnes, George O'Reilly, daughter Mary Frances, Les

THE SOUTH BANK SHOW

ITV, times vary What better subject for a Christmas tribute than Bing Crosby, the man who brought us *White Christmas*, the biggest selling single of all time? A crooner so laid back he'd make Des Lynam look manic, Bing notched up more than 20 gold records, more than 50 film roles and an Oscar (eat your heart out, Madonna). Though posthumous revelations that Bing beat his children turned his snow-white reputation to slush, here his widow Kathryn and only daughter Mary Frances (the actress famous for shooting JR) remember him fondly. There are also contributions from Bob Hope's wife Dolores and George Clooney's aunt Rosemary, who starred with Bing in the movie *White Christmas* (on BBC2, Christmas Day). **VP**

Paul, Nancy Olson, Dolores Hope, and, particularly, Kathryn Crosby. Also among those celebrities was Bing's greatest supporter, Rosemary Clooney. I've never seen a tribute programme about Bing that didn't include kind words and unstinted praise from Rosemary, and this was no exception.

> *"Every musician I ever talked to said they would rather work with him than anybody. He had a perfect sense of rhythm; and we had exactly the same sense of humour. He always could make me laugh."*

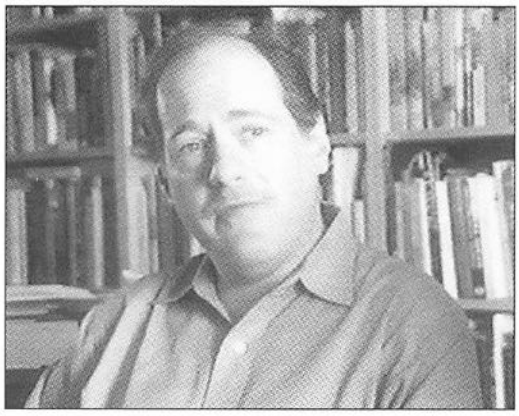
And no way was she going to let Gary Crosby's sad little book diminish Bing's reputation: "I was there; I know.", she said of his eldest son's exaggeration of the facts relating to the first family's upbringing.

As the ICC was involved in the production, by way of supplying facts, figures, photos and the occasional piece of film, it was pleasing to see and hear what amounted to The Bing Crosby Information File come to life on the small screen. But even so, Bing's peccadilloes during those early years of the jazz age did not go unmentioned. Of his carousing Paul Whiteman noted: "He wasn't difficult to work with, but he was sometimes difficult to find!" There can be little doubt that Bing's marriage straightened him out, even if it took a little time and effort from Dixie Lee. However, it was the 'Twenties madcap sense of carefree revelry that was to be the very foundation of Bing's great love and absorption of the jazz music that issued from every downtown gin palace and swanky night-club of the prohibition era. Despite its morally dubious origins Bing brought an acceptable respectability to the jazz influence and gave America music that could compete with the traditional European style of popular compositions.

Whilst the principle thread of connecting dialogue came from Melvyn Bragg, most of insight into Crosby's career came from Gary Giddins; saying "it was Bing who realised that a microphone was an instrument that could be played in much the same way as a violin; and because he became a popular figure very early he brought those rhythms and interpretations into the main stream where it had never been before."

In noting Bing's insistence on using the new technique of tape recording, and virtually creating a new, major network (ABC), Gary Giddins brought to viewers' attention another great impact that Bing had on popular entertainment illustrating that, yet again, he was the leader who everyone

followed. Seeing the clips of Jack Mullin and the Ampex Model 200 made one realise just how much miniaturisation has taken place in the field of recorded music. Les Paul being featured to show exactly why he owed his career to Bing and the original German Magnetophon. Brilliant though he is as a guitarist, would he have become as famous but for the inventiveness of over dubbing as with million seller songs such as "How High The Moon"?



Gary Giddins on The South Bank Show

Of Bing's private life, Gary said that Phillip also played down the eldest Crosby son's condemnation of his parent and thought Bing the ideal father - taking the boys to ball games and the like. "But, clearly, he was an absentee father who was missed. I think the great paradox about Bing Crosby is that here is a performer that everyone in the world thought they knew intimately. But Phil Harris, probably Bing's greatest friend and admirer, said that everybody tells me I knew him better than anyone else, in which case nobody knew Bing Crosby." Gary Giddins' words being paraphrased here and, no doubt, being expanded in his forthcoming biography of Bing.

The nineteen-seventies Crosby producer Ken Barnes was introduced throughout the programme with his usual knowledgeable observations; commenting on Bing's mastery of the microphone and subsequent lyrical nuances. His sex appeal: "the first voice with hormones" (though Rudy Vallee has already laid claim to that assessment, only he put it much more crudely), and Bing's jazz inflexions, which Ken illustrated with a scene from Mack Sennett's 'One More Chance'. The last chorus of the title song, sung to Patsy O'Leary at a night-club table, Ken considered to be "absolutely intuitive". Having worked with Bing over many albums we rate Ken Barnes' expert and continuously approving comments as being fundamentally well grounded of course, and essential to anyone interested in assessing both Bing's value to the world of Twentieth Century music in general, and his appeal to connoisseurs of popular music in particular.

The ICC's very own George O'Reilly, consultant to the programme, was seen reminiscing about Bing mourning Dixie's death in 1952. George, who met up with Bing in 1953, and thereafter remained a friend, said of him that whilst Bing would answer questions, he had his own way of putting his private life in the past. The credits also paid thanks to Ron Bosley, Malcolm Macfarlane, Lionel Pairpoint and Jim Reilly - all members of the ICC's management committee.

No programme about Bing Crosby would be complete without mentioning Bob Hope, the Road films and golf! On hand to do the honours in all three departments was Bob's wife Dolores. She spoke with humour of their friendly rivalry, which spilled over into every aspect of their entertainment life. They enjoyed each other's sparring so much that it communicated itself to their audience, she said. Bing was a fine actor, but the only thing that ever bothered Bob was that Bing's golf handicap was two strokes better! Needless to say the usual film trailers and other Road excerpts, along with sequences of the pair of them playing golf, were used to illustrate Dolores' affectionate reminiscences.

Among the numerous clips of non-commercial material were first family film, with Bing looking decidedly podgy at one time, and shots taken at his beloved Del Mar race track. Naturally, there were scenes of his wartime activities with, inevitably, that song "being sung to rapt, homesick troops - one of the definitive sounds of the Twentieth Century" offered Melvyn Bragg. But the end of the hostilities brought Bing even greater fame. In 1946 six million American radio listeners voted Bing the most popular living person. One feels that had the poll been taken world wide another nought or two could have been added to that figure

Nancy Olson's contribution to the programme centred around the film 'Mr Music', in which she starred with Bing. Again there was a tie-in with the tape recorder as a clip of the film showed Bing playing piano and singing into an Ampex machine. Still looking very attractive Miss Olson commented that as a young drama school actress Bing was immensely generous and tolerant of her inexperience to the point of amusement - though this wasn't her first film. She was very generous herself, too, by her extended comments on Bing's remarkable performance in 'The Country Girl'. But she picked up on a sadness that made her aware of what he was going home to; Dixie having become an alcoholic, and the onset of her cancer may well have been evident at that time.

Some five years after her death Bing was to find a second chance, having gone through a kind of Augustinian conversion, suggested Gary Giddins. He met, and eventually married Kathryn Grandstaff, who spoke, warmly, from their magnificent home in Hillsborough, San Francisco, of his appeal to her as a young starlet where they first met on the Paramount lot. Quoting Bing's, "Hi, Tex. What's your hurry?", Kathryn informed viewers of his simple, but obviously effective, chat up line. Shots of Bing's study were a backdrop to his signature tune, where on display his Oscar reposes beneath a crucifix within those panelled walls.

Mary-Frances Crosby Brodka, forever saddled with the appendage 'the woman who shot JR', came over with real warmth as she spoke very affectionately of her father:

> *"I am very proud to be his daughter, and I think his strength and power came down into his children. He learnt from the mistakes of his first family and was much more available to us.'"*

Being the only girl of seven offspring Mary-Frances had rather different treatment to most young ladies. "He taught me to hunt, shoot, fish and play tennis - all the things you teach your daughter to do! He didn't know what to do with a little girl. He treated me like a boy; which suited me fine."

However, it was left to an emotionally charged Kathryn Crosby to conclude the programme with perhaps the most telling quote. An epigram which befits Bing's own, laid back approach to his life and career, proving that young Nathaniel really knew his father.

Of winning the US Amateur Golf Championship Kathryn asked Nathaniel: "What would your Dad have said?"

"Don't let it go to your head, kid!"

Bert Bishop February 2000

Editor: I very much enjoyed the programme too and it was nice to have Bing presented so positively. Some reviews, such as the one shown below, thought it bland and some members felt that the show did not go into enough depth.

The South Bank Show
ITV 11.10pm ★★★

With *White Christmas* and all that, Bing Crosby is a seasonal subject. 'His style now seems to have gone out of fashion,' says Melvyn Bragg in the nearest thing to a provocative statement in this typically bland profile. We amble gently through the life — 'He was starting to improve his communication skills' (at school, that is), 'He enthusiastically joined the Jazz Age', and so, ploddingly, on. Still, such unchallenging smoothness fits the subject, and the time of year, and there is no shortage of clips of the great crooner exercising that unique voice. NA

I thought that Gary Giddins was excellent but one thing that worried me was his use of the word 'alcoholic' in talking about Bing's early days. I suggested to Gary that in the UK an alcoholic was someone who had to have a drink at all times of the day rather than someone who drank too much at social occasions and I wondered if there was a different interpretation in the USA. Gary responded as follows:

> *"I received a complaining letter about my use of "alcoholic" in the Washington Post piece you reprinted in BING. Our definitions are the same, but in my discussion with the reporter I used the word as an adjective, which has a different connotation. To say Bing was an alcoholic suggests one thing (a lifelong condition); to say he was alcoholic at one point means another (a serious problem in his youth). I'm a lot more clear about it in the book. I've spoken to many authorities on this and they can't seem to agree about Bing. Gary Crosby thought Bing was the only male in the household who was NOT a certifiable alcoholic. Doctors I've interviewed all agree that an alcoholic cannot be a casual drinker, as Bing was throughout his life. But they also point out that he suffered all the symptoms, including long blackouts. One specialist I spoke to is convinced he had to have been a clinical alcoholic but with an almost unheard of willpower.*
>
> *Either way, it seems to me he comes out heroic, a man who completely licked and controlled a dependency on a stimulant. The only distinction is whether the dependency was psychological or physiological. I agree that the former seems more likely and that he was not a clinical alcoholic, but the degree of his addiction in those years should not be understated. He was one serious drinker before he took charge of his life. Many people—including those who adored him (Dolores Hope, Artie Shaw, Marsha Hunt, whose aunt he dated in the months before Dixie)—tell harrowing stories of finding him passed out under beds and tables. And yet within three years he was sober as a judge; in 35 years of making feature films, only twice is he known (to me, anyway) to have arrived late because of a hangover—once on College Humor and once on High Time. Friends of his have told of evenings when they drank into the small hours, yet Bing would insist on an 8 a.m. call, never the worse for wear. If you ask me, Bing should be a role model for people trying to beat dependencies."*

Thanks to Gary for the clarification. I was surprised how few letters I had about the South Bank show from members and this reaction generally seems to indicate satisfaction with a programme. However I sought comments from several stalwarts of the Crosby scene and the first one to respond was **Stan White.**

> "The South Bank Show ran very smoothly through Bing's life both personal and the entertainer, giving as far as was possible a balanced view of the man and his life. This programme was (and is) needed to combat some of the negative and often insulting programmes about Bing, on both, Radio and TV, ever since Gary had his awful book published, a gift to the gutter press of the world if ever there was one.
>
> It is obvious that one and all who were involved with the making of the programme, did their best, making it the best programme about Bing in recent years. There is now a need for another programme which deals mainly with Bing the singer, because whatever else he did, it was his singing which carried him to untold world-wide fame, he certainly was the best popular singer of the 20th century the sounds of that singing are captured in the thousands of recordings of his voice. Perhaps Paul Barnes is the man to undertake such a programme, whether for Radio or TV. "

My next call was to former BING Editor, **Ken Crossland.** who was not quite so positive as he commented:

> "Out of the blue came a letter from George O'Reilly telling me to watch out for the South Bank Show on Boxing Day. It's a "Voice Of The Century" feature on Bing, said George and I could hardly wait. The first sign of back tracking came with the Radio Times and no mention of "Voice of the Century". Then there was Melvyn Bragg's opening. Any time the host introduces his subject with the words that "his style seems to have gone out of fashion", you do wonder if his heart is really in it. The real problem was that the show couldn't make up its mind whether to be tabloid or Telegraph. We had a Californian academic telling us that Bing had had the most significant impact on the mass media in the 20th Century, but this turned out to be a reference to Ampex tape recorders, not Blue of the Night. Gary Giddins and Ken Barnes sought to explain Bing's vocal significance, but somehow got lost in the family photos and the inevitable discussion about Bing the father as opposed to Bing the singer. Credit to George and others who made it happen, but a shame that ITV's nerve failed on the title and the theme."

Finally, our old friend and founder member **Ralph Harding** came out of 'retirement' to pen his reaction:

> "When I switched on my TV to watch a Bing Crosby profile, I expected to see a potted biography of a singer whose career spanned fifty years and a programme containing shots of films, songs and interviews which we have seen before. In a nutshell, nothing really new. I was pleasantly surprised. The credits for this programme were Ken Barnes, Ron Bosley, Rich Little, Malcolm Macfarlane and Jim Reilly and it is commendable to see members of the ICC keeping the memory of Bing alive when, as Melvyn Bragg explained at the commencement of the programme, Bing's style seems to have gone out of fashion. A Profile of Bing Crosby was thoroughly enjoyable and to my great pleasure, many scenes were unfamiliar to me. It was an absorbing hour of information about the greatest singer of the last century."

So, generally favourable reactions to a positive programme. Our thanks to all concerned in making it happen.

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Pat Shields, 4502 Kraft Avenue, Studio City, CA 91602, USA

I'm writing in response to your comments regarding the issue of "reasonable debate" at the end of Clive Menadue's letter in the Winter '99 issue.

You ask, "Should this continue" ... to which I say, "Yes, by all means!" How boring it would be to read one "puff" piece after another. Bing deserves better .... and so do we! I'm anxious to read the Giddins book because Bing is long overdue for a serious, objective biography. I have the impression Mr. Giddins will tell the truth, which is all I ask. In most of today's tabloid journalism, one has no way of knowing what's true and what's being blown out of proportion in order to sell more papers / books / whatever. I didn't watch the "E! Mysteries & Scandals" program — not because they might say something bad about Bing, but because their agenda is to use only that information that will fit their particular format. I'm only interested in objective presentations, and boy, are they hard to find! After all, everyone has an agenda of sorts. Some wish to tell only the good, others only the bad. Hopefully, Gory Giddins will tell the whole truth ..... and then, as always we I.C.C. members can weigh in on all the Pros and cons.

(Editor: Pat has articulated my own thoughts about reasonable debate and another one who agrees with this approach is John Martin...)

John Martin, Oaklands, Hall Walks, Easington Village, Co. Durham SR8 3BS

My thanks to you and all the stalwarts who have contributed to BING over the years. The improvement in quality and content of the magazine is remarkable. Bing would have been delighted. Long may it continue.

I think you have got the magazine format about right, plenty of information and praise but leaving sensible room for debate. I must say I feel a little guilty when you say we must make our voices heard in perpetuating Bing's memory. We seem to leave it all to the regulars who grace the pages of BING.

You are right, of course, when you say that the present generation are unaware of Crosby's achievements but the 1930s, '40s and early '50s are a long long time ago. After all what did we know or care during those years about the stars and performers at the beginning of the century?

You reminded us of his amazing achievements in record sales, film and radio - all the more remarkable when you consider the effects of the depression all through the 1930s in the USA and the rest of the world. Virgil Edwards of the USA reminded us of this in BING 122 when he said he would have given anything to have had a record player! How many millions of us were in the same situation?

An interesting article from Stan White re Bing's displeasure with 'If I Loved You'. I think all long term fans can pinpoint approximately when a particular song was sung by Bing. The changes in Bing's voice over the years are fascinating to observe. The deep and highly commercial voice in this era which led to million sellers like 'Now is the Hour' and 'Galway Bay' had its downside in the fact that Bing could no longer soar up and down the scales as he had in 'San Antonio Rose' or 'Sweet Leilani'. A fact on which he expressed his concern on more than one occasion. As you say in your comments on Stan's letter, a softer approach would have been better on this particular song but was he able to achieve this at that stage of his career? It is obvious that Bing's deep tones were his most commercial and what he was most famous for. For myself, I like the best of both worlds, for example 'Empty Saddles', 'Down by the River', 'Can I Forget You' and a beautiful rendition recorded in 1936, 'I Still Love to Kiss You Goodnight' which Bing sings without all the frills but with a clarity of tone as pure as anything I have heard before or since.

What I would like to see in the new Millennium may be a 'pipe dream' but nevertheless something to think about. My wish would be for there to be something on TV, preferably main stream (but more probably the History Channel) a TV version of 'Bing Sings' similar to the long running mini radio shows many years ago - just one film episode per night i.e. one song.

I would be most surprised if anything like this didn't spawn a large number of new Crosby fans. After all people haven't changed that much, only musical tastes. In furtherance of my 'dream' I list below a few choice examples, heavily biased I must admit by my own fascination for the young early Bing.

I Surrender Dear
With Every Breath I Take
Down by the River
A Man and His Dream
Pennies From Heaven
Sunday, Monday or Always
The Kiss in Your Eyes
White Christmas ('Holiday Inn' version)

(Editor: Yes, wouldn't a TV show as suggested by John be wonderful. I suppose it's all a question of money. I gather it costs $6000 a minute to use extracts from most films although trailers are free which is why many documentaries about film stars use excerpts from trailers. So to make the venture pay, you would need adverts to produce more than the cost of the material and the other production costs. We have got to admit that it would probably be marginal as to whether it would make money or not, but what a lovely thought by John.)

Robert C. Achorn, 41 Johnson Rd., Sutton, MA 01590-2305

Odds and Ends:

—Jeanine Basinger's new book, "Silent Stars," refers in passing to "the three top male box-office stars of the sound era, John Wayne, Clint Eastwood and Bing Crosby." She suggests that all three were successful because they displayed a sense of humor about their image, with "Crosby's casual ad-libs" standing as one example of that.

John Wayne was No. 13 on the American Film Institute's 1999 list of "greatest screen legends." Eastwood and Crosby were evidently not legendary enough to make the cut.

A more recent selection of "100 Top Stars of the Century" chosen by Variety, the entertainment weekly, includes Crosby on the 1940s list, Wayne on the 1950s list and Eastwood on the 1970s list. Obviously, all three careers covered more than a single decade.

Rosemary Clooney's new autobiography includes an appropriate tribute to Bing for helping her make a successful comeback after her breakdown. Stephen Holden, reviewing the Clooney book in The New York Times, says it reveals Crosby to be "a man so locked within himself that he couldn't take a compliment." Perhaps Gary Giddins will unlock Bing enough to explain what that means.

Possibly the first critic to claim deterioration in Bing's singing was a sharp-tongued American, George Frazier. For years before his death, Frazier served as jazz critic for Esquire magazine and an acerbic columnist for The Boston Globe. But in his salad days, he reviewed records for another daily, The Boston Herald.

When, in 1944, he reviewed Bing's recording of "I'll Be Seeing You" and Cole Porter's "I Love You," Frazier wrote that Crosby's melodic voice was fading fast; after a dozen years as the greatest of pop singers, the lilt was gone, Bing had to strain for some notes and the musical end was near. That was striking commentary because, in those days and even much later, nobody said such things about the incomparable Bing, the most famous voice in the world.

In retrospect, it is apparent that after 1938 Bing's fluid, open-throated warbling gave way to a more casual style, sometimes almost talk-singing. But how much of that was loss of voice and how much was a style change to meet popular tastes is not so clear.

What is clear is that Bing sang with good success for more than three decades after Frazier's proclamation of musical doom. Indeed, in 1944 Bing's most popular years were still ahead of him. Eventually Frazier came to approve some of Bing's singing in a jazz vein. The early talk about the failing voice was filed and forgotten—by most people.

C. Wilkinson, 8 Old Coach Lane, Belfast BT9 5PS

My grateful thanks to you and to the team for the great work in the field of Crosbyana during 1999. Your sterling work for the cause and the benefits that accrue to us - the ordinary members - is deeply appreciated. The superb issues of BING during the year were as always, a pleasure to read and very informative.

It was a particular joy to read the interview with Phillip putting the record straight and telling the truth about Bing. *(Editor: Mr. Wilkinson's letter was one of several making the same points and certainly Phillip's positive comments about his father have been very well received.)*

George Patmore, 53 Severn Way, Cressage, Shropshire SY5 6DS

It was the third day of Christmas and, dreading an outbreak of foul pest, I had disposed of the partridge in the pear tree along with the two turtle doves and three French hens. With all energy now concentrated on the defences against the millennium bug I was vulnerable and fell victim to old black jack - the 'flu virus, or at least one of his ilk.

Fighting back with the aid of a toddy for the body, enhanced by pure lemon juice and honey, I decided to relax and let the rest of the world go by, luxuriating as I did so, by browsing leisurely through a copy of the 'Directory of Popular Music' by Leslie Lowe detailing the more successful recordings of popular songs of the 20th. century. My temperature rose even more so on reaching the S section when my beady eye (the left one) leaped to a song titled 'Song of the Wanderer, A'. It was the following line that had attracted my eye to swivel in its socket as it read:

Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra HMV B5311
Vocal Bing Crosby, with the year given as 1927.

Summoning all my remaining energy I reached for my copy of the Bert Bishop / John Bassett Crosby recordings 'bible'. Not a mention of any wanderer warbled by Bing on record.

Now I feel confident that you, Malcolm, or at least fifty or so Bing aficionados, will immediately refer me to page so and so of BING No. so and so where every detail will be listed relating to the recording. If, horror of horrors, a gold nugget has in fact missed the ICC net then please can I ask you to mobilise a force of investigators to track down this unknown 78 rpm recording and decide whether Mr. Crosby's dulcet tones are in fact on the disc.

(Editor; Well, I had to disappoint George as I could not immediately provide an answer other than the number he quoted was that of 'That Saxophone Waltz' with a non-Bing item on the other side. The answer was eventually provided by Ralph Harding who confirmed that the non-Bing item on the other side was indeed 'A Song of the Wanderer' but that it was definitely not Bing. A pity as I got quite excited for a while. Just shows that you can't believe everything you read in books!)

Peter Monaghan, Crosbyanna, 25 Weir Avenue, Barrhead, Glasgow G78 2BY

....Once again the magazine is right up to its usual high standard, but who in heaven's name chose the picture for the back cover? It must be the worst photo of Bing I have ever seen.....

(Editor: I cannot tell a lie, it was me! We do not have an unlimited number of colour photos of Bing and as it was Christmas and as the photo was 'different' I decided to use the item on the back cover. Peter is not alone in complaining as Arnold Pope also wrote in a similar vein and that probably means that there must

be many more readers amongst the silent majority who did not like it. I will try to be more circumspect in future.)

Gillian Marsh, 42 Sheppard Way, Portslade, Brighton BN41 2JD

I'm sending my renewal for the ICC and have much enjoyed reading the magazines, which are so very good. I don't know how you all do it and congratulations to the team. I had the 'Diary of a Lifetime' for Christmas and that, too, is amazing in the detail. It showed Bing to be incredibly hard-working, even though having health problems - which I had not heard about before - when he was still quite young....

I am a latecomer on the scene and you have probably done something like the Most Popular Ten of Bing's Records. I particularly like 'The Kiss in Your Eyes' and 'Hello Mom', followed by 'Country Style'. It is a pity that so many of his old 78 records never come up now. I also have a yen to see 'Dixie' and 'Sing You Sinners' but I've never known them to be on TV. I can only be glad that we had 'Emperor Waltz' which was wonderful entertainment... and how interesting to read in your magazine that it was filmed in Jasper (which I visited in 1998)!

Brighton's one claim to fame is having Bing's very last concert. When we first had tickets the show was cancelled due to Bing's health, so we must think we were lucky that it did, in the end, take place and was such a marvellous evening. I noticed that Bing's effortless singing into the microphone, very mellow to the ears, contrasted with the loudness of Rosemary Clooney. He also stayed on stage, when he didn't really have to, staying in the wings whilst his family or Rosemary performed. I hasten to add that I like Bing and Rosemary performing together.

My sister and I sometimes discuss the old days and how much we enjoyed 'Mail Call' and 'Command Performance' when we were children during the latter part of the War. They had so many wonderful Hollywood stars then. She has reminded me, too, of 'Bing Sings' on the radio every week when Bing's records were played for 15 or 20 minutes. I also managed to listen twice to the excellent weekly life of Bing in the 70s on the radio which must have gone on for 15 weeks and was narrated very much by Bing himself. He was a very easy speaker... so much of it sounded off the cuff.

Lastly I spotted this little note in a collection of war time newspapers that came from Past Times..

> *Daily Sketch dated June 3, 1940*
> *From 'Radio Guide' Forces Programme*
> *10 p.m. The Bing : Stories about Bing Crosby and some of his records.*

Congratulations to all concerned with keeping Bing's memory alive and I hope a revival of appreciation for him happens in 2000.

(Editor: Nice to hear from Gillian, who is one of our newer members and is there anyone out there who remembers that radio programme in 1940?)

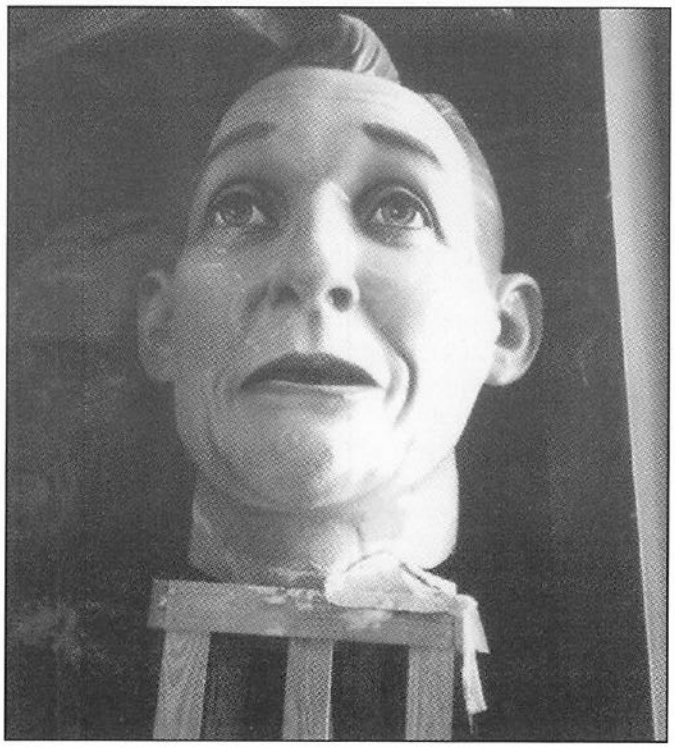
Bob Weinberg, 100 Bluffview Drive, #604C Belleair Bluffs, FL 33770, USA

I am a frequent visitor to New Orleans during Mardi Gras time. Five years ago I viewed a shocking sight during a parade. Unfortunately I did not have my camera. It was the head of 'The Groaner' on a float. I told my wife of my sighting and she said I must have had too many hurricanes (a stiff New Orleans drink).

The following years I returned with camera to seek out Bing, even going so far as to go the builder of the floats but no Bing. His whereabouts were unknown. He could be anywhere in the United States in other parades.

My wife and I returned for Mardi Gras this year and the furthest thing from our mind was Bing. We decided to go to the float builder for a preview of the floats for that year for lack of anything better to do, when up on the top shelf of their factory work area I saw a friendly familiar face 'Bingo'. The workers were nice enough to get me a ladder so I could get up close and personal with our leader. Finally at long last I proved to myself and my wife I hadn't been hallucinating five years earlier. Mission accomplished! I am enclosing the pictures to share with fellow ICC members hoping the fuss I made and the time I spent hunting for Bing wasn't just for my own personal gratification.

In conclusion fellow ICC members, please remember Bing is alive and well and floating in New Orleans, Louisiana.



W.J.Newell (Jim), 17 Edwina Close, Bitterne. Southampton. S019 7BJ Hants.

I am in the process of collating all my hundreds of film mags which go back to the silent picture days. In the Picturegoer of June 24, 1950 on page 3, I came across a letter with a photo of Bing beside it and the letter enclosed in red brackets announcing that this was the letter of the week and had won the "Letter of the week" award and the writer of it would receive £2.2s.0d. The contents of the letter are as follows.

> *"It seems that Bing Crosby is taking more interest in the acting side of his films, at the expense of his singing. The result, however, is disappointing to his supporters - they go to the cinema to hear him sing, but only see him act.*

Even the one or two second-rate songs he does put over are poorly recorded. We can see plenty of good acting from well-known stars in current films, so sing, Bing, sing."

The magazine's comments under the letter were as follows:-

"There is a good case for more singing in Crosby films, but isn't there a stronger case for better tunes for the Groaner to put over? Some of "Road" pictures contained no more songs than many of his current films - yet they stand out as musicals because of the quality of the lyrics."

I, (Jim) have many thoughts on the above letter with 50 years of hindsight. Perhaps our club members might like to write in on their thoughts of the above letter.

Oh! by the way the writer of the letter was our very own Leslie Gaylor. I wonder what you spent the £2.2s.0d on Leslie ... another Bing record or two I suspect.

LIONEL'S LINES

"LET'S START THE NEW YEAR WRONG"

Hands up, all those who can spell "millennium". Capital! Although hardly surprising, since the word was volleyed into your court from every corner of the media during 1999. The dictionary meaning is, "a period of one thousand years". Whilst having no wish to undervalue the awesome significance of the year MM, I am one of those who believe that two thousand years will not have passed until the two-thousandth year has elapsed. By the same token, I am convinced that the 21st Century will not begin until the stroke of midnight on 31st December, next. You can go your way and I'll go mine but you should be notified that, as early as New Year's Day, the "cracks" were already beginning to appear. Presenters of regular programmes on both radio and television who, on the previous day, had boasted that this would be their last appearance of the century/millennium were then, not quite so sure.

Letters (previously censored?), explaining with shrewd logic and mathematical precision, how we had all been duped, were beginning to appear in the Press. It was also revealed that, in the mid-Nineties, the old British Heritage "lot" had selected the date for the Millennium celebrations because, otherwise, "ordinary people would not understand." So, there seems to be a very good chance that we "sub-intellects", will able to do it all again. Contrary to what we may have heard, the Millennium Dome came in well ahead of schedule and there's still time to build another. For your part, you will able to startle the world, once more, with your unused Party Poppers, purchase a further plastic commemorative dish or, bury another time capsule.

Some might consider that the most odious "tat" to be hawked around in virtually every newspaper were the "Millennium Lists". I suspect that these are concocted by canvassing ten office juniors for a ragbag of names, which are put in a hat, and randomly selected. "Star Wars" was judged to be the Film Of The Millennium. Are there any other contenders?

"The Best Composer Of The Millennium" found John Lennon, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Paul McCartney and Elton John, rubbing shoulders with Chopin, Bach and Beethoven. George Gershwin managed to get a look-in but no place was available for Cole Porter, Irving Berlin or Jerome Kern. The punters had also over-looked, Rodgers and Hammerstein, the men who had written their favourite "football song". It might be wise to draw a veil over the list of the "Best Vocalists". Your man didn't make it but neither did Frank Sinatra, Enrico Caruso, Ella Fitzgerald or Dame Nellie Melba.

"Bohemian Rhapsody" was voted "Best Song Of The Millennium." If they had said the "longest", it might have been understandable but remember, we are talking about a thousand years. What happened to "Summer Is Icumen In"; "Greensleeves"; "Auld Lang Syne"; "The Old Folks At Home"; "The Hallelujah Chorus" or "Danny Boy". Would it have been presumptuous to submit "Star Dust"? Was "White Christmas" scratched before the "off"?

At the time of writing, a television programme is scheduled, purporting to present the "Top Ten Love Songs". No odds can be offered on "Let Me Call You Sweetheart", "My Funny Valentine" or, "True Love" being mentioned because I have had a sneak preview and the only song charted before 1966 is "Unchained Melody". The best copy that you may have of Bing singing this number will be Ken Barnes' 1978 re-mastering of the original with Buddy Cole. Of the remaining nine items (I don't want to remember the titles), three are from the 90's and two each from the 80's, 70's and 60's. Some consolation may be drawn from The South Bank Show's, "The Voice Of The Century", transmitted on December 26th and of which, you will read more in this magazine. Supplementary comfort can also be obtained from a publication which has recently come to my attention, entitled, "British and American Hit Singles - 51 Years Of Transatlantic Hits 1946-1997" by Chris Davies. The book leans heavily on Joel Whitburn's, "Pop Memories 1890-1954" but brings the process, virtually, up to date.

Let me advise you of the criteria, imposed by the author, governing inclusion in the book, by quoting some extracts from the preface - "This book lists those titles which appeared in the top 75 singles charts in the UK and the top 45 singles in the USA, covering the years 1946 to 1997." Entries are sub-listed to show the first dates of release. *"I have considered this necessary because for some titles as much as 20 years elapsed time exists between appearance as a hit in the USA and entry to the UK chart."* As an example, Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" first appeared in the US charts in 1942 but also appeared in the UK charts in 1977." *Those titles which sold one million copies or more as a single title are also included and these may precede 1946 (having*

taken many years to reach one million sales).... Some entries do not include all hits simply because the finished volume would then have been far too long"

Bearing in mind the conditions listed above, it is heartening to have confirmation of what we already knew: i.e., The entries for Bing Crosby easily outweigh those of any other artiste(s) and exceed the combined entries for Elvis Presley, The Beatles and Michael Jackson. Yes, the total is bolstered by re-entries and re-issues (14 alone for "White Christmas") but the same applies to every other major entertainer, many of whom enjoy a further boost from modern-day "re-mixes" and of course, it could be said that these latter-day, musical "giants" still have plenty of time to emulate Bing's achievements but even with eternity at their disposal, is it likely?

Although some assert that it originated as early as 1949, as far as this writer is concerned (and realised, only in retrospect), the cataclysm that overtook popular music occurred in 1954. More concerned with the selfish pre-occupations of a young man, I summarily dismissed "Shake, Rattle And Roll" to the same category as, "Gilly Gilly Ossenfeffer" - Tin Pan Alley "novelty" numbers that would come and go, as they had always done. I was sublimely ignorant of the fact that "Rock Around The Clock" had been recorded on April 12th and was "bubbling under", ready to be the sensation of 1955. I was vaguely aware that male quartets seemed to be proliferating, indulging in overwrought harmonies which stretched lyrics that I might have otherwise enjoyed, beyond redemption. Their names were legion, "The Four (Aces), (Lads), (Tunes), (Knights)", "The Hilltoppers", "The Gaylords", "The Crew-Cuts" etc. Another "novelty" tune, "Sh-Boom", by the last-named group is often quoted (erroneously) as being the first "rock 'n' roll" record to reach the No. 1 position. To me, the most amazing fact is that it required five men to write it.

Anyway, why all the hoo-ha? The phrase wasn't new. The Boswell's had a hit record with "Rock And Roll" in 1934 and what's more they sang it on Bing's Woodbury Show. It was really only an extension of "Rhythm and Blues" we recalled from our school days when, having been appraised of the true meaning of the patois, we sniggered, knowingly, at the "mucky" connotations of "jelly roll" and "rocking in big brass beds".

And what was Bing up to while this was going on? In between wooing Kathryn Grant, he had appeared on half a dozen television programmes, filmed "The Country Girl" and, although his last appearance in the top twenty recording artists was in 1951, he had cut another eighty titles for Decca, including the "Musical Autobiography" set. He was also holding up the waning months of his very last season of a radio series in the traditional format for General Electric.

It may only be imagination but in those five months from January to May, could there be detected a slight disinclination to visit the popular music charts in search of material for his radio programme? Perhaps an endeavour to "beat the rap" by concentrating on the oldies?

Let's look at the evidence. Understandably, his most recent recordings were plugged, "Secret Love", "Stranger In Paradise", "Vaya Con Dios", "Changing Partners", "My Love, My Love", "Tobermory Bay", "Lost In Loveliness", "Young At Heart" and "(Oh! Baby Mine) I Get So Lonely".

This last song, with orchestral backing by Guy Lombardo, presenting something of an exception, being a cover version of a No. 2 hit for the Four Knights. Aided by a slightly nasal, unnamed, male vocal group, Bing seems a little ill at ease trying to introduce a little "pep" into a tune that really hadn't deserved his attention. There were three, solo airings of the number on GE with John Scott Trotter but without the chorus. All versions appear to be identical and at the close of its first broadcast, he offers the (tongue in cheek?) observation, "Wasn't that tricky? I think that little hesitation between the 7th and 8th bar really gives it that zing."

Apart from covering the Dean Martin hit, "That's Amore" and Perry Como's "Wanted", the emphasis was on "standards": "Gypsy In My Soul" and "You Go To My Head" (both 1938), "If There Is Someone Lovelier Than You" (1934), "Sometimes I'm Happy" and "Hallelujah!" (both 1927), "'Deed I Do" (1926) and there were many more. Bing's own successes from the past were also acknowledged, "Love Is Just Around The Corner", "It's Easy To Remember", "I Still Suits Me", "I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me" and again, there were others.

This apparently defiant attitude proved to be of no avail because the General Electric series faded away, with scarcely a whimper on the 30th of May. We have mentioned, previously, the catastrophic effect that television had on radio variety and drama and now more than 60% of the networks' programmes were devoted to disc jockey shows. Bing Crosby had something to say about the current trends. Uncharacteristically, forthright in an article entitled, "I Never Had To Scream", for "Look" magazine in November 1954, he noted,

> *"the whole music business has shaken out and changed a lot but not all for the better. The way the game is played now, it's the disc jockey as much as, or more than the singers who produce the hits. A young singer starting out now has to woo them because they run the business. Some of them bother me. I really believe that if a disc jockey is going to set himself up as a judge, he should have some real knowledge of what he's about. It is apparent that many who speak in the accents of authority are all accents and no authority. By playing and replaying a song which has nothing but nuisance value, a large nuisance*

and a lot of sales can be brought about. But in the long run, that practice will give this business a short haul and a bad shake."

He expressed his concern regarding "the tuneless trend that seems to be the coming vogue" and went on to add his opinions on the content of some of things the disc jockeys were playing.

"Songs of another day (e.g. "Sweet And Lovely" and "Love Thy Neighbour") survived my assault on them. No screams. No honks. No chain-rattling"

The comeback was swift. "Variety" of 17th November 1954 carried the headline, "Bing Sure Started Somethin'", over a whole page of comment and mixed criticism - "Bing Crosby's top-ranking position in the music biz for the past 20 years and more is perhaps, best reflected in the widespread reaction which his article on current tunes, singers and disc jockeys, in a recent issue of "Look" magazine has touched off. The Groaner's comments, although largely critical, were authoritative enough to spark a cross-country pro-and-con debate, especially among the disc jockeys."

Here are some excerpts from the varying shades of opinion:

(Rex Dale, WCKY, Cincinnati) "Let's face it. Bing's right. We've got to take the responsibility for the things that hit our turntables. Many of us have been so occupied with trying to come up with something "different" that we've lost sight of everything save self-promotion."

(Bill Silbert, WMGM, New York) "Crosby's all wet."

(Russ Coglin, KROW, Oakland) "Crosby's 100% right!"

(Buddy Dean, WITH, Baltimore) "It is true that popular music is in a deplorable state. The jockeys may be partly responsible but I don't believe as responsible as Bing has led his readers to believe. As always, the public is the final judge in all things."

(Mike Woolston, WNOR, Norfolk) "Solid entertainers, like Crosby, who go along year after year, are the backbone of the industry. Naturally, the novel tunes, the crazy sounds, the gimmicks, attract attention but don't last long enough to do more than make a few people rich."

(Gordie Baker , WSPR, Springfield) "Certainly Bing is right when he says nobody can pick a hit tune. At the present time, it is evident that we are going through the phase of group singers. If we try to analyse the styles of the Four Aces, Crew-Cuts, Gaylords or Four Knights, we find their style of singing is considerably different and much louder than the Inkspots or the Mills Brothers but it's quite obviously what the public wants";

(Ira Cook, KMPC, Los Angeles) "Crosby's estimation of the music biz is sound. Each week I receive around 40 new releases. Almost half of them are pretty bad. The songs don't make too much sense. The singers are off key and the lyrics, a little suggestive. But I don't dare toss any out because I don't know which of these "dogs" will turn out to be tomorrow's hit."

(Nick Nickson, WBBF, Rochester) "We must not fail to realise that in the world of music, as with the world in general, things are changing. Bing came along at a time when the nation needed comfort and solace from the troubles it was going through. The romantic ballad was the ideal form of popular music to help settle things down. Today, after a couple of rough wars, the nation is pretty much up in the air and only lately, attempting to settle down into normalcy. A political as well as an economic situation, is always reflected in the music of the land. This does not mean that great songs are not coming along. They certainly are. However, it does seem that in looking back, songs always seem better."

Sobering thoughts are that the adolescents who, in their quest for "something different", were instrumental in changing the face of popular music are now, probably, in their sixties. That Elvis Presley will be as remote to a 25 year-old, as the Wright Brothers are to me and that "nostalgia" is now a Rod Stewart Karaoke or a "70's Disco Night".

Still incensed by the subject of the "Top Ten Love Songs" I shall assail you with one last quote:

"You are the promised kiss of Springtime
That makes the lonely Winter seem long.
You are the breathless hush of evening
That trembles on the brink of a lovely song..."

I should be grateful if anyone out there can put this to music for me.

Or, perhaps you would be happier with, "It's ecstasy, when you lie down next to me".

Lionel Pairpoint

(Editor: An interesting look at a pivotal point in Bing's career and as we know the music business changed forever from then on. Incidentally, I spent several minutes trying to work out where the lyrics quoted by Lionel were from before inspiration arrived and I realised it was 'All the Things You Are".)

Books 'n' Bing

1. SWING IT! - The Andrews Sisters Story

This new book by John Sforza is a lovingly put-together account of the Andrews Sisters lives as the best-selling female vocal group of all time. John is clearly a devoted fan and he begins by describing the early days of the close knit Andrews family. The father, Peter Andreos, had changed his name to Andrews on his arrival in the USA from Greece and the mother was Norwegian-born Olga. The girls modelled themselves initially on the Boswell Sisters and after several years hard work they achieved 'overnight' success with their Decca record of 'Bei Mir Bist Du Schon'. Their frequent work with Bing is described in detail including the following quote from Maxene Andrews.

"Bing loved to kid around with my sister, Pat, because he didn't read music, and we would come in on the record dates with just a sheet of lyrics, but with the routine of the record, and he and Pat would go to the piano. And Vic Schoen only played piano with two fingers - and so, they'd go to the piano and Bing would say, 'Okay ,Pat, what am I singing?' So Pat and Vic would run down the whole routine for him, and it would be once or twice and he was prepared."

Complimentary words from Vic Schoen are there too with Schoen saying:-

"We never had any problem with Crosby. I never

did. And I took some risks in the way I wrote for them. But he loved it, so I went on doing it. I never had any indication to stop doing it or to change it."

However Schoen also reflected,

"Bing could be very intimidating, and his exterior was sometimes, cool, if not cold. If he liked what was going on in the studio he gave it everything he had, although he didn't appear to be making an effort to do so. He had a remarkable ability to create and improvise in front of a microphone. He expressed his acceptance by doing the things required of him. If he didn't like something, he simply didn't do it. I can recall a rehearsal I was overseeing once with Bing and a female vocalist who he felt wasn't singing up to his high standards. He just put on his hat and left the studio without saying a word to anyone. It was a very awkward situation."

I wonder who the female vocalist could have been? Schoen did provide the musical support on Bing's duets with Evelyn Knight - was she the one?

The trio's incredible successes in the War years are documented and then the close knit family unit collapsed with the deaths of first the girls' mother in July 1948 and then their father in 1950. Jack Kapp, who had guided their recording career, had died in 1949 and both Patty and Maxene divorced their husbands around this time. Patty had been married to Marty Melcher who was later to marry Doris Day and apparently lose her a fortune. As if this was not enough, Vic Schoen parted from the trio in 1951 and the girls started to fall out as Patty became tired of being one-third of a group and wanted a larger financial share. This led to Patty leaving the trio in late 1953.

Maxene started her own nightclub act and then formed up again with LaVerne. They wanted British singer Dorothy Squires to join the act as Patty's replacement but this did not proceed and they continued as a duo. Neither the duo, nor Patty as a single, enjoyed the same level of success the girls had seen as a trio and they reunited in 1956 with some success until LaVerne's death from cancer in 1967.

The death of LaVerne "ended a bonding legacy for the sisters, and things would never again be quite the same." After several years of separate activities, Patty and Maxene were reunited in 1974 for a musical on Broadway called 'Over Here'. The show was a real success and it was scheduled for a national tour starting in January 1975. Sadly serious problems between the sisters over money surfaced and the road tour was cancelled. The sisters did not speak ever again. Maxene died in 1995.

This is a most interesting book with thorough and detailed appendices covering the Sisters' films, radio and TV appearances and also there is a full discography. Published by the University Press of Kentucky, the ISBN number 0-8131-2136-1. I paid £13.82 for my copy from Amazon.

2. Girl Singer - An Autobiography

by Rosemary Clooney with Joan Barthel. This new book is published by Doubleday and is priced at $24.95. I have not read it but I mention it here to draw it to members' attention. Initially I had only the review by Stephen Holden of the New York Times to guide me and it seems that the book tells Rosemary's life story frankly with family and marriage problems discussed as well as her own breakdown. The review states:

"Once she was well enough to perform, she found herself tens of thousands dollars in debt (she had never paid attention to checks she had signed) and her career in ruins. A crucial helping hand on the road back was offered by Crosby, who invited her to tour with him. Thus began a solid recording career for the Concord Jazz label, and Clooney realized her dream of playing solo at Carnegie Hall."

Rosemary and Bing in one of their TV appearances together.

It sounds like a good book and I have also heard from Michael O'Toole (one of our original members from 1950) who says:

"This is a remarkable story told in a remarkably frank way. It is a vast improvement on her previous effort in 1977. By now of course she has been able to balance the horror of her marriage breakup and her mental breakdown with her great singing on the Concord label for the past 22 years. She pays ample tribute to her great friend Bing for his kindness in getting her back to work in 1976. Above all this book shows her sincere affection for her profession and her fellow entertainers. She is one of the last of the great popular singers and she is appreciated and loved by all age groups, long may she reign. This book is a great read and contains a discography by Michael Feinstein."

3. My life in spite of myself

Lars Roth put an interesting entry on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum last January which I reproduce with grateful thanks to Steven Lewis and Lars himself.

"I recently re-read the biography of Roy Clark who had the following to say about meeting Bing in his book 'My life in spite of myself' (pages 147-148):

However, my biggest thrill on TV was the time I got to work with my total idol, Bing Crosby, on one of his Christmas specials. I flew from Maryland into Los Angeles for the taping. I couldn't get a direct flight and as a result was running late. I got off the airplane and went right to the rehearsal studio on Sunset Blvd. Les Brown, Bing's orchestra leader, was there, along with some members of the band. I walked in with my clothes bag over one arm, my guitar under the other, and saw Bing lying on a bench. Mind you, we'd never met. He was just stretched out, resting, while the orchestra rehearsed his charts. He had a ball cap pulled down over his eyes, and when he heard me come in he raised it to see who it was. 'Hey, Roy, how you doin'?' he said in that familiar drawl. My idol! Of all the people I ever wanted to be like, to emulate, Bing Crosby was at the top of the list! He was everything I ever wanted to be, with one of the truly great voices. In my estimation he could sing a song better than anyone who ever lived. When he sang, he made it look so easy. Like that was the only thing he did. Or when he was acting, it was the same thing, as if that was the only thing he did.

I'll never forget, we were also supposed to do a duet of 'Moon River'. Bing and I would get there early, or stay late, to rehearse our parts. This one time we were sitting by the piano, working on the harmonies, when his lovely wife, Kathryn, came into the room. Understand, all of my life I worked with trios of tenor singers, which allowed me to do a lot of switching of parts. If I got too high for one guy, he could drop down and another could take over. The upside of that type of singing is the production of beautiful harmonies. The downside for me was that I didn't know a legitimate part from Adam. Well, Bing was trying his best to teach me my part, but the harmony I sang wasn't the harmony written. He sat there, played block chords on the piano, and finally looked up to me after I hit another note I wasn't supposed to, stopped, turned to Kathryn and said, 'You know what his problem is? He was raised on that Presbyterian harmony!'"

Roy appeared with Bing on 'Bing and Carol - Together Again for the First Time' which was shown on NBC on December 17, 1969 having been taped the previous month. Our thanks to Lars Roth for this interesting excerpt.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Bing's FBI files

In December an organisation called APB News put Bing's FBI files on the Internet and alongside them they put a brief article which discussed the files and offered conjecture by one or two 'organised-crime experts'. Roger Osterholm was also contacted and he emphasised that Bing's "connection with organised crime was tenuous and on a limited social basis." Roger mentioned that Bing had played golf with 'Machine Gun' Jack McGurn. Overall the APB article was fairly innocuous and hardly worthy of comment. My own view of Bing's life is that he made every effort to be a very good man but nevertheless we probably all accept that he was a human being not a Saint.

Within a few days however, the New York Post had seen the article and using it, produced a most malicious and inaccurate feature that virtually made Bing out to be one of the worst people who had ever lived! I was alerted to this by Gary Giddins and he commented:

> *I've been a journalist for 28 years and I don't recall ever seeing such a willful distortion of facts for purely malicious purposes in an allegedly legitimate paper. It reminds me of the bad old McCarthy days.*

The New York correspondents for the British tabloids and also for papers in Australia and Ireland saw the article and they then rewrote it under their own names and a day later we had a rash of stupid articles in the UK and elsewhere. I wrote to the various newspapers who carried the articles pointing out how inaccurate they were and suggesting that they should retract them and apologise to all those they offended. Copies of the correspondence were put on the Internet by Steven Lewis. Normally I feel that it's best to ignore adverse media stories and treat them with the contempt they deserve. They usually quickly fade away. However on this occasion I did feel that the time had to come to fight back and taking this a stage further, I wondered whether Kathryn Crosby had any form of legal redress in the USA. So I copied all the correspondence to Kathryn and asked whether she could force the newspapers to retract the articles and perhaps make a donation to charity in lieu of damages? She holds the power over Bing's image and as the NY Daily Post article was grossly inaccurate, there may be possibilities. In the UK we have a Press Complaints Commission and in the absence of a reply from any of the Editors, I submitted formal complaints against the Guardian, the Express, the Daily Mail and the Daily Mirror. Correspondence has been long and complicated but developments are awaited.

So after all this fuss, what is in the files that made everyone get so excited? I downloaded all 281 pages from the APB web site and duly read through the lot. In the main the files give details of various threatening letters sent to Bing by cranks over the years and the FBI's investigation of them. There are also several warm and friendly letters from J. Edgar Hoover to Bing. They do not show someone who "lived in a sleazy netherworld of corruption when the stage lights were off" or that Bing "happily hob-knobbed with gangsters who indulged his passion for heavy-duty betting" as alleged by the newspapers.

All of the newspapers referred to a memo from Clyde Tolson to J. Edgar Hoover and said that it mentioned Bugsy Siegel and Frank Nitto. The memo does not list these names, it was APB News that mentioned them. One paper implied that the memo indicated that "the star had coughed up $10,000 because of a threat hanging over him from mobsters." In fact the memorandum from Tolson to Hoover dated June 21, 1937 starts out mentioning that Hollywood is "overrun at the present time with all types and kinds of racketeers, who are preying upon prominent persons in the motion picture industry." The second paragraph mentions Bing as follows:

> *"An instance was cited in this connection of an individual who preyed upon the sympathies of a*

number of motion picture actors and actresses on the plea that he was afflicted with a disease, and was unable to support himself. It seems that as a result of his contacts with a number of persons in the industry he received considerable sums of money. He is reported in one instance to have received $10,000 from Bing Crosby, and $1600 from the mother of Ginger Rogers, and it is stated that in all he probably secured between $40,000 and $50,000."

Doesn't this put the matter in a different light? No threat, no gambling losses, just Bing helping someone out who he wrongly perceived as being in trouble.

The only reference in the files to Bing having a connection with organised crime appears in a memo dated January 16, 1959 in which it is said:

"The Salt Lake City Office has developed information indicating that Moe Dalitz received an invitation to join a deer hunting party at Bing Crosby's Elko, Nevada, ranch, together with the crooner, his Las Vegas dentist and several business associates."

The FBI didn't know that Bing had sold the ranch the year before! That's all there is in 281 pages, covering Bing's whole life, connecting him with gangsters!

There are details of Dancara stock farm, a gambling place, which was "running wide open in Burbank." The Stock farm was raided by the District Attorney's office in the early morning of March 16, 1947, and "approximately 100 patrons, among them being Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, were permitted to leave the place." Naturally the papers go to town on this minor item and several of them go on to say that Bing's temper was out of control much of the time. I informed them that Bing was one of the most controlled people there was. They also give much space to the allegations of a man who said that he had gone on an all-night gambling spree with Bing, although the FBI files state quite clearly that the man "is obviously mentally deranged."

I finished up my letters to the newspapers as follows:

"Throughout his life, Bing refused lucrative invitations to entertain at Las Vegas because of the crime links. He raised vast amounts for charities and he gave unstintingly of his time to servicemen in WW2. A devoutly religious man who cared deeply for his family, it is manifestly unfair how he is subject to so much posthumous criticism nowadays. I am disappointed that you have to dig up the infamous book by one of Bing's sons and even then you can't get the title right! The book describing Bing as cruel has been discredited by the rest of Bing's sons but still you have to refer to it.

At Christmas, the time when Bing's voice is still heard everywhere, surely it is now time to give a proper balanced view of one of the major figures of the 20th. Century. A retraction of your article and an apology to those it offended would not go amiss. And if you want the truth about Bing, watch the South Bank Show on ITV on Boxing Day night."

Radio and TV

Apart from the newspapers articles, there was TV and radio coverage of the matter. The BBC got hold of the item and I was interviewed by the BBC World Service during the evening of December 23 by Clive Marden on the News Hour programme. Mr. Marden opened the interview by playing a snatch of Bing singing 'White Christmas' and said that the voice was melodious, reassuring and wholesome, "Bing Crosby - the gentle crooner, he was almost what White Chistmases were made for" but "according to just released FBI files there was a much darker side to the man" - a man who associated with gangsters. "One of his golfing partners was Jack 'Machine Gun' McGurn who allegedly took part in the St. Valentine's Day massacre in Chicago." continued Clive.

I was introduced as Editor of BING magazine and after some background detail I told Clive that the media had tried to create a scandal out of what were boring files at which point Clive interrupted me and said "Hang on, there's a memo in the files which mentions Bugsy Siegel and Frank Nitto" who were allegedly Mafia members. I corrected him and pointed out that the memo did not mention those men at all and that it was APB News who raised their names as conjecture in their article. I explained what the memo had said and how it had been widely misinterpreted. Clive then threw Gary's book at me metaphorically speaking and I told him firmly that Gary had written a book for money after Bing's death, a 'Mommie Dearest' book which was discredited by the rest of his sons. I went on to say that I had dined with Phillip Crosby in the previous May and that Phillip had reiterated that the book was untruthful. I suggested to Clive that "these lies keep surfacing and really we have got to put them away and forget them." Clive responded saying that whatever the truth, these stories made Bing more interesting. I laughed at this and finished up by explaining away another error in the press coverage. Clive wound up the short interview at that point and later I received a nice phone call from one of the programme's production team thanking me for a lively interview. They even sent me a cheque for £31 as a fee!

Later that night, it was the turn of Roger Osterholm in Florida to be interviewed over the telephone by BBC Radio 5 at 2:20 a.m. (UK time). Roger explained that Bing enjoyed golf and that he was a very decent fellow who did not chase women and was not a gangster as indicated in the media reports. He went on to say that Bing was a very nice guy and he suggested that he was the kind of person that some people cannot stand because he made them look so much smaller. He stated that Bing really was a very wonderful man and that only 2 people - Gary Crosby and Al Rinker - had ever said bad things about him. Roger dismissed Gary's book comprehensively and suggested that Rinker's comments were "sour grapes". Roger made the point that "Bing lived his life in the sunlight" and that he was an all American kind of guy who was his own man and was a good role model. The interviewer thanked Roger and said "You've done a reasonable job in sticking up for the character of Bing Crosby" which was very pleasing.

I e-mailed Sky News expressing disappointment with

their coverage of the story but I did not receive a reply. Terry Wogan on his daily BBC Radio 2 show mentioned the articles and poured scorn on them saying 'why can't they leave Bing alone?' I wrote to him expressing the ICC's thanks.

We must keep plugging away when we see these malicious articles. What can we do about it? Write and complain and then boycott the newspaper concerned. And ask your friends and everyone you meet to do the same!

Malcolm Macfarlane

ONCE IN A WHILE

The section of the magazine covering the obituaries of those connected with Bing and sadly the winter months have increased the number of entries this time.

Donald Mills - the last surviving member of the Mills Brothers, died of pneumonia on November 13, 1999 at the age of 84. The Mills Brothers started out in 1925 and were billed as Four Boys and a Guitar. Their forte was to imitate instruments with their voices and their first big hit was 'Tiger Rag' in November 1931. A duet with Bing of 'Dinah' brought another massive hit and they continued to enjoy great popularity for another 20 years. Sadly one of the brothers - John Charles Mills - died in 1936 and their father, John Sr., replaced him. Probably their most famous song was 'Paper Doll' which reached Number One in the charts in 1943 and stayed there for an incredible 12 weeks. Another chart-topper was 'You Always Hurt the One You Love' in 1944 and in all they had over 60 hits. They appeared in several films including 'Reveille with Beverly', and 'Rhythm Parade'. The Mills Brothers appeared with Bing in the film 'The Big Broadcast' (1932) and they made three records with him, 'Dinah', 'My Honey's Lovin'Arms' and 'Shine'. During Bing's radio series for Woodbury they were regular guests appearing over 20 times. Surprisingly they did not appear on the Kraft Music Hall with him, but they came back for spots in Philco and Chesterfield Shows. In the television era, they guested on a Hollywood Palace show hosted by Bing and of course they were there for Bing's 50th. anniversary performance at Pasadena when they memorably reprised 'Dinah'. In addition Bing guested on the Mills Brothers Charity Show in Los Angeles when the brothers celebrated 50 years on show business. After the retirement of their father, the Mills Brothers continued as a trio until the death of Harry Mills in 1982. Brother Herbert passed away in 1988 and Donald continued to perform for a while with his son, John. A review of one of their performances together will be found in BING #111 page 12.

Vic Schoen who also succumbed to pneumonia, died in January at the age of 83. Born in Brooklyn, Vic was originally a trumpet player before leading his own orchestra and writing and arranging for many top stars. He is perhaps well known for his work with the Andrews Sisters during their peak years when of course he worked with Bing on many occasions. He first worked with Bing on June 10, 1942 when he backed him on two tracks including the solo version of 'Road to Morocco'. Schoen left the Andrews Sisters in 1951 and went on to be musical director of 'The Big Record', a CBS Variety Show hosted by Patti Page.

Hedy Lamarr was found dead in January. She was 86. Born in Vienna and the daughter of a doctor, she was originally named Hedwig Kiesler. Hedy made her film debut in German-language films and at the age of 18 she became an overnight sensation when she made 'Ecstasy' in which she appeared stark naked with the result that the film was widely banned. Hollywood duly called and she appeared in 'Casbah' (1938) opposite Charles Boyer. Her other early films in Hollywood such as 'Boom Town' in 1940 with Clark Gable were not well received and it could be said that her film career drifted until she was cast as 'Delilah' in 'Samson and Delilah' (1949) which was a veritable triumph for her and at the box office. Married six times, she had three children. She was registered as blind at the time of her death. Hedy Lamarr worked with Bing in 1942 when they appeared on the Gulf Screen Guild production of 'Too Many Husbands' which was broadcast on CBS on March 8. They also took part in a major show which was put on for the Bureau of Public Relations in Washington DC on August 30, 1942. The proceedings were subsequently issued as Command Performance shows #30 and #31. Their final appearance together was when they recorded Front Line Theater for the AFRS on September 10, 1942.

Frank DeVol - composer of scores for more than 50 films including 'Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte', 'Pillow Talk' and 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner', Frank DeVol died of a heart attack at a care home near Oakland, California at the age of 88 last October. In addition to film scores, he also wrote theme music for the TV shows 'The Brady Bunch' and 'My Three Sons'. Originally an arranger for Alvino Rey, he went on to be orchestra conductor for many stars including Doris Day, Nat King Cole and Gordon MacRae. The only time that Frank seemed to have worked with Bing was in March 1959 when Bing recorded three of the songs from 'Say One For Me' with an orchestra led by him.

Ella Mae Morse left us last October at the age of 75. She came to prominence as a singer with Freddie Slack and his Orchestra in 1942 when she had hits with 'Cow Cow Boogie' and with 'Mr. 5 by 5'. Ella then went solo and had successes with 'Shoo Shoo Baby', 'No Love, No Nothin' and her biggest hit 'The Blacksmith Blues' which reached number three in the charts in 1952. She appeared with Bing on the Kraft Music Hall of November 19, 1942 and also on several AFRS shows.

Kenny Baker the English jazz trumpeter died in December at the age of 78. He was a prominent musician for nearly 60 years having been a member of Lew Stone's band and Ted Heath and his Music before leading small units of his own. Always in demand, Kenny dubbed the trumpet solo supposedly played by Kay Kendall in the film *Genevieve* in 1954 and in the 70s he played in support on the *Muppet Show*. Also, the TV drama *The Beiderbecke Affair* featured his faultless impersonation of Bix's cornet. Kenny was part of the Pete Moore Orchestra which accompanied Bing in the UK sessions produced by Ken Barnes and in the song 'The Best Things in Life Are Free' you can hear his

excellent muted trumpet solo. Ken Barnes mentioned only recently how Bing and Kenny had great admiration for each other. When Ken augmented the former Buddy Cole tracks with Pete Moore's Orchestra it was Kenny who added the important trumpet solo at the start of 'I Can't Get Started' duplicating the original work of Bunny Berigan.

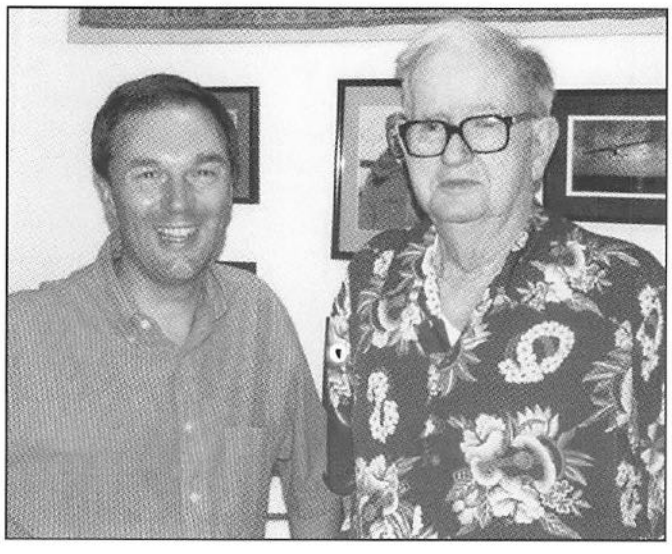
Henry Pleasants, the music critic died in London on January 4 at the age of 89. His book 'Great American Popular Singers' looked at the work of Bing, Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee and Ethel Merman amongst others and he was most complimentary about Bing saying:-

> *"The octave B flat to B flat in Bing's voice at that time (1930s) is, to my ears, one of the loveliest I have heard in forty-five years of listening to baritones, both classical and popular. It dropped conspicuously in later years. Since the mid-1950s, Bing has been more comfortable in a bass range while maintaining a baritone quality, with the best octave being G to G, or even F to F. In a recording he made of 'Dardanella' with Louis Armstrong in 1960, he attacks lightly and easily on a low E flat. This is lower than most opera bases care to venture, and they tend to sound as if they were in the cellar when they get there."*

AND FINALLY, Ken Crossland has penned an appreciation of his friend, Al Sutton, former Editor of BINGANG who died in February.

Al Sutton 1910 - 2000

One day in August 1976, a letter with an interesting logo dropped through the letterbox. The logo had a cartoon of Bing underneath which were the words "Another Crosby Collector". The letter began "My Dear Mr Crossland..." It was from Al Sutton and it was the start of a friendship between us that spanned the generations, and lasted until his death on 19 February, six months short of his 90th birthday. What was a pen-friendship became a personal one when Linda and I visited Al and his late wife, Mil, in 1980. It gave us first hand exposure to a bear of a man, who could grizzle and growl, but who more often than not had a twinkle in his eye and a chuckle in his voice.



Ken Crossland and Al Sutton - August 1998

We visited them several times more, and after Mil's death a few years back, I saw Al one last time in 1998. "I'm gonna give the Millennium a real go" he said, and of course he did. His Crosby Collection was everything you would expect and more, sometimes duplicates, sometimes triplicates (although invariably, if it was a third copy of something I didn't have, it came my way).

We traded parcels on a regular basis and on the perfect terms of trade; I always thought I owed him, and he always thought that he owed me. Al took over the editorship of BINGANG in 1980, and turned it into the respected magazine that it has been ever since. We continued to correspond regularly, letters with which I will never part. Al had a marvellous turn of phrase - "I never liked him and always shall" he said once of someone who had crossed his path. Al was a Crosby original. He could recount first hand the arrival of Bing on the music scene in the late 1920s; could tell you about bumping into Bing in a roadside diner in the seventies, and lots more in between. The Crosby world has lost a giant, and I have lost a dear friend.

Ken Crossland

Fifty Glorious Years!

It was 1950. The Labour party had just won a general election with a 5 seat majority, Sir Harry Lauder died and record fans listened to their music on 78s. Customs officers seized smuggled nylon stockings with a black market value of £80,000, petrol rationing ended in May and the English football team lost 1 - 0 to the USA in the World Cup in Brazil. But more important matters were afoot, the British Bing Club was launched in March 1950.

There had been UK based Bing clubs before and in fact Jim Newell recently sent me details from Film Weekly of January 18, 1935 which read:

> *Admirers of Bing Crosby may join the International Club in his support. This club is recognised by Mr Crosby and offers facilities for outdoor sports. Details may be obtained from G. E. Marshall, 32 Glenwood Road, Hounslow, Middlesex.*

What happened to this club (and the outdoor sports!) has been lost in the mists of time and the British Bing Club launched in 1950 was originally the brainchild of several Crosby admirers.

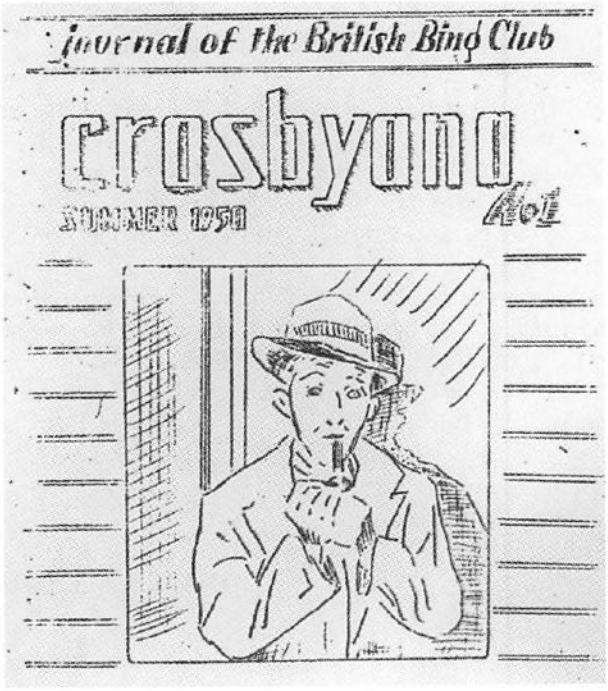
The Early Years

Arthur Allen and Jean Rainey became the first two co-presidents and they received the blessing of Bing and some practical help from Larry Crosby. The co-presidents were keenly supported by Leslie Gaylor (Publicity Officer), Colin Pugh (record reviewer) plus Dot Hardiman as secretary. The club's first magazine entitled 'Crosbyana' was issued in the Summer of 1950 and we reproduce the cover on the next page.

Amongst the first members were the following who are still members today:-

Stanley J. Austin - John Fahy - Ray Forster - Les Gaylor Ralph Harding - Eric Jackson - Percy Keepin - Geoff Milne - Bert Morton - Michael O'Toole - Colin Pugh

In 1951 Reg Davis took over as Editor from Art Allen



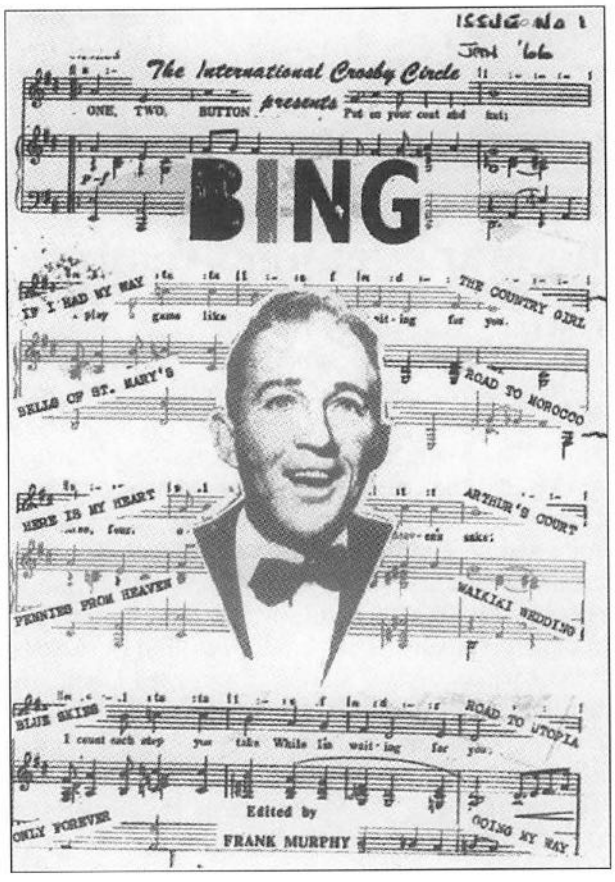
and by 1952 the joint editors of the magazine were Reg Davis and Geoff Milne. Ralph Harding was contributing all manner of articles, some under pseudonyms, because of a shortage of material. Membership stood at 110 by the end of 1952.

Spring 1953 brought a surprise to the members as they discovered that their club was now called The Crosby Society as it was felt that the club's initials of BBC might cause confusion with another organisation. Art Allen returned as editor and the magazine was called Crosby Post. In 1954, financial problems had almost put the club out of existence but it was relaunched in November 1954 as The British Crosby Society and its magazine remained as Crosby Post. The Active Co-Presidents were Dorothy Hardiman and Jean Rainey with Frank Murphy's name starting to come to the fore. Frank had joined the club in December 1950 and went on to hold every position in the club.

The Murphy Era

By May 1955 Frank was Vice-President and to give an example of his enthusiasm, he organised a raffle by post to raise funds for the club. Tickets were 1/- each and the first prize was a private issue Bing LP. By 1957 Frank was Active Co-President with Dorothy Hardiman and the club had acquired an Irish branch whose secretary was Johnny Hopkins. Bill Taylor was the 'Discologist' and Stan White was the 'General Affairs Officer'. Publicity Officer was Ted Laker and the American Correspondent was Pat Sullivan. In 1957 the dream of a complete discography of Bing's records was launched by the club for the first time and this was to be the now much sought after 'The Road to Bing Crosby' in which Derek Parkes, Fred Reynolds, Bob Roberts, Reg Davis, Geoff Milne, Charles Cowdry, Leslie Gaylor, Les Phythian and Ralph Harding played major parts.

Frank ran what was very much a 'fan club' where negative comment was almost unheard of and this produced divisions as the years went by. But Frank's tremendous energy and enthusiasm ensured a reasonably successful club and membership rose to around 200. By 1960, the magazine was being issued every two months with Frank and Tony Carpenter sharing the editorial duties. In April 1961 Cecil Westrope took over as Editor whilst Frank was President and Discologist.. Cecil was however to resign a year later and Frank took over as Editor again.

There was a major shock in the September 1965 edition of Crosby Post as Frank announced that he would be resigning from the British Crosby Society to form a new club called the International Crosby Circle. Ralph Harding was to be the new Editor of Crosby Post. The ICC was to run separately from the British Crosby Society and to have a team of correspondents in as many countries as possible. However this started off an almighty row which went on for many months until the various parties made it up. The outcome was that the British Crosby Society was 'enfolded' into the ICC and a separate and ultimately very successful magazine called The Crosby Collector was published by Ralph Harding. for the next six years. Frank continued as Editor of the club magazine which he christened BING magazine and the cover of the first edition is shown.

In those days, the magazine was typed out on stencils which were then duplicated. Frank had many talents but typing and spelling were not amongst them and there were many hilarious typos which were highlighted in a superb article by Fred Reynolds called 'To Frid from Frunk' which we have reprinted on several occasions, the last time being in BING #100. Frank remained in the Editor's chair until 1971 when he was succeeded by John Bassett. John brought his expertise as a printer to the layout of the magazine and he played a major part in the discographies produced in the 1970s. He worked closely during this period with the club's secretary, Reg Bristo, who eventually took over as Editor in 1975.

Ah.... Bristo!

Reg had firm opinions on most subjects but his enthusiasm leapt from the pages of the magazine. He was Editor from 1975 to 1989 and he presided over the exciting years of 1975 to 1977 when Bing was so active. Whilst Les Gaylor and Bert Bishop contributed to the magazine in handsome measure, Reg wrote most of the rest of the contents. He duplicated the magazine (which was published at quarterly intervals), posted it, acted as Secretary and Treasurer as well as issuing club cassettes to raise funds. Looking back now, it is difficult to know how he did it. Membership increased dramatically in the first few years he was in the chair because of Bing's higher profile and for the first time, the club managed to have its details put on Bing's LPs. Reg was described in an excellent appreciation by Fred Reynolds in BING #94 which included the words:

> *"His editorial policy, if undefined, has been consistent and forceful and no one could deny its individual tone with a style that opted for quantity and a comfortable prejudice."*

We all knew where we stood with Reg and what he stood for. He carried the weight of the club for almost twenty years until ill health caused him to hand over the reins in 1989. It was Michael Crampton who hurried down to South Wales to help get BING #92 issued and we all read of Reg's resignation. He was to be dead before the end of the year.

The Management Team

BING #92 reached us in late Summer 1989 and the way forward was discussed at the Leeds meeting on October 1st. Michael Crampton drew five of us together for a separate meeting and the 'famous five' were Ken Crossland, Keith Parkinson, John Joyce, Keith Parkinson and me. We all agreed that no one person could take over from Reg and the only solution was to share out the jobs and bring in others to help us. Ken Crossland became Editor, I was his Assistant, John Joyce was to be publisher / distributor and Michael became Secretary / Treasurer. Support was to be obtained from Keith Parkinson, Lionel Pairpoint, Leslie Gaylor, Derek Parkes, Fred Reynolds and Ron Bosley. Slowly we started to put it all together and in our first edition, BING #93 published in December 1989, Ken Crossland laid down some guiding principles which we still follow to this day. They were (and are):

1. The magazine is intended to cater for all who enjoy Bing - from the collector to the connoisseur to the critic to the casual fan.
2. The pages of the magazine will be open to anyone with something to contribute to the memory and reputation of Bing.
3. The magazine will not be given over to criticising other singers and other types of music. We would not wish it to be done to 'us' and we will not therefore do it to 'them'.
4. The magazine is yours. Other than the in the Editorial column, you will not find a commentary by the editor running through the journal;. Nor indeed will find the editor writing the journal for you. You must subscribe and support by giving us your views, your articles and anything else you can offer.

Bert Bishop, Wig Wiggins and David Currington soon joined the team. Ken Crossland handed over the Editor's role to me in 1993 but sadly John Joyce and Derek Parkes died some years later. It was John Joyce who set us up with a proper printer so that a glossy magazine could be produced. Initially it was 32 pages and it has gradually grown ever since. Jim Reilly has played an increasingly large part in the club's activities as the years have gone by and Etty Gits has become our European representative. Membership too has expanded particularly in the USA where Wig has done a tremendous job of pulling new members in to the club. We reviewed our progress in the last edition of BING so I will not repeat our findings here. Suffice to say, that we have come a long way in the last 50 years. It would not have been possible without a tremendous amount of hard work from so many members over so many years. To all of them we give our heartfelt thanks.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Brunswick
Present
Bing CROSBY
with DIXIE LEE CROSBY
With Victor Young and his Orchestra
02291 { THE WAY YOU LOOK TO-NIGHT / A FINE ROMANCE
(both from "Swing Time")
This record, we prophesy, should have a sensational success. It is the first duet record Bing Crosby has ever made, and human interest is contributed by the collaboration of Bing and his wife Dixie Lee Crosby. Moreover the songs are acknowledged to be the two leading melodies of the Ginger Rogers-Fred Astaire picture "Swing Time." A fine romance is performed as a duet in the picture.
Be sure to hear this record—we know you will like it.
Records for NOVEMBER, 1936
For list of previously issued Brunswick Records see Decca Supplement for November
For complete list of exclusive recordings by Bing Crosby, Grace Moore, The Mills Brothers, Boswell Sisters, and Duke Ellington, ask for "Brunswick News" leaflet.

Bert Bishop's BING ON THE BOX

Whilst there were any number of excellent movies showing over the Christmas period on terrestrial and satellite TV ('Singing In The Rain', 'Harvey', 'Some Like It Hot', 'An American In Paris', 'Lady And The Tramp' among the musical and comedy classics) it was the relatively new Carlton Cinema digital service that provided a boost for the only two Bing films otherwise shown. If all systems were available to you then you could have experienced a veritable feast of cinematic Crosbyana over the four day period leading up to and including Christmas Day. Misgivings about the merits, and expense, of the digital services were shown in a new light as a result of this early December, projected bonanza, but it was an enthusiasm that waned in the cold light of the January bills that even the sustaining celebrations of the year 2000 could not diminish! I remain sans digital.

A late entry for the column is the remake of 'Stagecoach', as shown. With a midday Saturday slot it nips in before the inevitable sporting programmes so should have a reasonable viewing audience. But, as has been said many times before, comparisons with the original are always going to take the shine off of it. However, 'the crooner puts in a decent performance.', writes the Radio Times films reviewer in allotting it a two star rating. If, like me, your interest in Bing films lies principally in watching him stroll through life with a song or two in his heart and a quip on his lips then his all-acting, no singing roles are of merely peripheral interest to be enjoyed on a level of passing curiosity only.

DECEMBER

GOING MY WAY	Sky Cinema (2 showings)	24th
WHITE CHRISTMAS	BBC2	25th
THE BELLS OF ST MARY'S	Carlton Cinema	22nd 23rd
HOLIDAY INN	Carlton Cinema	24th 25th
ROBIN AND THE 7 HOODS	Carlton Cinema	24th

JANUARY

THE PRINCESS AND THE PIRATE	Carlton Cinema	1st
HIGH SOCIETY	TCM (digital)	9th

FEBRUARY

THE COUNTRY GIRL	Sky Cinema (digital)	23rd
MY FAVOURITE BRUNETTE	Sky Cinema	13th
MY FAVOURITE BRUNETTE	Sky Cinema (digital)	25th
STAGECOACH	BBC2	19th

There's no doubt that December was an excellent month for the Crosby cause. The principle reason being the South Bank Show, reviewed elsewhere in the magazine. My few lines regarding Bing's place in the

Sister Benedict and Father O'Malley contemplate 'The Bells of St. Marys'.

musical history of the Twentieth century in the opening paragraph of this column in last summer's magazine seem to have been a fortuitous comment - indeed, serendipity before the event! The ICC owe a great debt to Ken Barnes and, of course, our own George O'Reilly, once again, for being the instigator of a huge publicity coup that sought to set the record straight. Most members have expressed their satisfaction that the programme went a long way in redressing the balance of Bing's outstanding importance to the entertainment industry against the onslaught of others less worthy to be so honoured.

We were doubly fortunate in having Kathryn Crosby visiting London between theatre engagements in America and Russia - where she performed Chekhov's 'The Seagull' in Novosibirsk, the capitol of Siberia, in the language of that country no less. Her television appearances here provided an opportunity to promote the South Bank Show whilst, at the same time, talk a little of her own activities and her years with Bing. The first, and most interesting of her UK television invitations was on Open House - With Gloria Hunniford on the 25th. November and Malcolm has reviewed this earlier in this issue of the magazine. On ITV's 'This Morning - With Richard And Judy', which went out on the 13th. December, she promoted the South Bank Show a little more, quoting Dr. Steve Schoenherr's remarkable comment that sets the tenor implied in the programme's title, 'Voice Of The Century'. But there was less spontaneity and rapport with the two hosts than with Debbie Greenwood; the similar amount of time seeming to be contrived and fumbled. The event was not exactly a missed opportunity as Kathryn was able to bring the Boxing Day programme to viewers' attention. However, her guest spot could have been much better presented, and despite their considerable experience the two hosts didn't come over as being really relaxed with their interviewee.

A cartoon new to some of us, but spotted and viewed on Christmas morning by Ron Holder was Christmas Toons, the animated tale, White Christmas, wherein a young girl wishes for a white Christmas but only gets her wish after writing to Santa Claus. Bing sings the famous Christmas song at both the start and conclusion of this charming, twenty minute film. A note in the Radio Times shows it as being a BBC1 repeat, but from when I don't know.

An e-mail, originally posted by Scott Hart but eventually hand delivered by my postman via our Editor, advises me that the United Kingdom cable channel, UK Arena broadcast a programme entitled 'Later On Crooners' in which there was about five minutes of Bing in clips from 'Holiday Inn', a black and white TV interview and his appearance on Top Of The Pops with "That's What Life Is All About". An excerpt from the Parkinson Show was also featured. In a response from Lars Roth, he expressed surprise that Bing was in fact on the 'Pops' programme and went on to say that BBC Prime, available in Europe, has been transmitting re-runs of Parkinson, having kicked off with the Bob Hope guesting in which there is quite a bit of Crosby in his light-hearted Nemesis role. So far neither of the Bing shows. But they must come along, surely.

BBC1 again. On the 15th January there was a 'This Is Your Life' special entitled 'Night Of A Thousand Lives' in which celebrity guests, all of whom had been 'lives', were present to look back over the many years of this BBC institution and some of its highlights. Back in 1970 Bob Hope was so honoured, and it would have been quite remiss of the show's producers had a word or two from Mr. C not been forthcoming at that time. In an engaging segment that Michael Aspel introduced with the words: "It's not always 'Darling you are wonderful'. Tributes can be warm, affectionate and occasionally very frank"; there was Bing saying: "I can tell you that I love and admire him. You have to for his tireless zeal on every worthwhile cause or project. He's absolutely indefatigable; and at his age, too!" With the camera cutting between Bing and Bob we could witness the latter's embarrassment being relieved by the final, anticipated quip.

For a video treat of marginal interest to this magazine - but full of good music nonetheless - is the Pasadena Roof Orchestra 30th Anniversary Concert from Regents Park last August. Attention to it is drawn here because of an impersonation of the Rhythm Boys with their recording of "Louise". Duncan Galloway takes the Bing role, complete with pipe; James Langton is Al Rinker and the PRO's own pianist, the irrepressible Simon Townley, hams it up as Harry Barris. Their rendition is a fairly faithful reproduction with only some slight updating of the asides as with "I'll have to e-mail her" substituting for "I'll have to telegraph her". Nearly two hours of excellent entertainment for c. £15 direct from the PRO headquarters at The Pasadena Roof Orchestra, Priors, Tye Green, Elsenham, Bishops Stortford, Herts CM22 6DY. If you do invest in this video don't forget to mention BING and the ICC!

ONE OF THE NEWER FELLAS

We're finding them all the time. New programme presenters on the wireless, that is. Yes, we're happy to welcome Trevor Fry of BBC Bristol who, with The Late Show, has been taken under the wing of Maggie Ryan and is being educated accordingly. He's already received the previous issue of BING, so he will know he's got a lot to catch up on. Having been presented with an initial cache of Crosby CDs on which to draw he was able to make Bing the featured artiste every night for all of one week. The beautifully sung "No Other Love" from the Broadway Songs CD was his first excursion into the realms of Crosbyana. Let's hope this is the beginning of a fruitful affair for all your listeners and west country Crosbyphiles in particular, Trevor. Meanwhile, readers are advised to watch this space!

Another new boy where this column is concerned is Ed Stewart who has been amazed by the 'thousands of requests' for Crosby records on his 5pm Sunday evening BBC Radio2 programme. He had announced in advance that he would be featuring Bing on that day but nevertheless he had to say "We've had so much mail. But none can compare with the incredible amount of requests for Bing Crosby." Among those incoming communications were requests for "The Folks Who Live On The Hill" from Malcolm, our Editor, and Yvonne Bowles, a long time and very keen Bing fanatic just like most of the ICC members. During the programme celebrating the Harry Lillis legacy a most interesting story

came to light on air. A certain Terry Tresnant - and I hope I've spelt his name correctly - who is a steward at Leeds Castle, in Kent, 'phoned in to say that back in 1952, on the eve of his eighteenth birthday, he and his brother went to the Temple Golf Club in the hopes of catching a glimpse of Bing and the three other celebrities who were playing in the charity golf match there. In the car park they spotted a couple of members' lapel badges laying on the ground and, putting them on, were able to gain access to areas not available to the general public. They couldn't believe their luck as they hobnobbed with the stars, including Bob Hope, Ted Ray and Donald Peers. After the match Bing asked Terry where the 'john' was. Not familiar with this American expression for the toilet Bing had to enlighten the teenager. "D'ya like music?" asked Bing, as they entered the loo.
"Anything you sing, Bing.", he responded.
Bing expressed surprise that a "really young guy" would like his records and asked Terry if there was any particular song he enjoyed.
"If There's Anybody Here From Out Of Town", suggested Terry.
"I can't remember them all. D'you know the words?" replied Bing.
"What, in here!", expostulated Terry.
"Yeah, best acoustics ever.", reassured Bing.
And as they stood there, shoulder to shoulder, they went into their Crosby - O'Connor act with young Terence standing in for the original small fry himself. A mental picture of which lady readers might prefer to eschew. However, one just knew that Ed Stewart would be unable to resist the rejoinder:

"You must have been flushed with success!'

LEYDIES NIGHT

Closer to Ireland than most of us Judith Ley's Sundown programme, from her Manx radio station, indulges the Gaelic fraternity quite frequently with a sprinkling of songs from Bing's ancestral shores; especially drawing on the 'A Little Bit Of Irish' CD. But there's plenty of variety on this relaxing, late night show and regular requester, The Badger, whose identity still remains a mystery (why isn't he in the ICC?), continues to have a nice selection of Crosby records played: the rarely heard on air "Only Forever", with Rosemary Clooney, and "My Melancholy Baby" being two very appealing examples. Frank and Irene Luthwaite, of Whitehaven, are also two Crosby fans frequently catered for. Avoiding the obvious, Judith gave a spin to a couple of Christmas songs and also the similarly themed, by association, "Going My Way"; a line first spoken by Mary Carlisle to Bing in the film 'College Humor' at the conclusion of the "Learn To Croon" sequence when she gives him her books to carry.

Anne Hopper's Music Box shows a little earlier in the evening and as Cumbria is not too distant from the Isle of Man you may be able to tune in to both. Acknowledging that she'd be hard put to manage the programme without a good chunk of songs from the 'Forties, and especially Bing, "a singer who taught by example all those who came after him"; Anne was among the first to feature the Legends Of The 20th Century compact disc. Hardly representative of the Crosby career on record, it is still a handsome production, though, and Ms Hopper delved into this musical book to enchant her listeners with "The Second Time Around" and the more hokey "Teamwork", plus the infectious "Muskrat Ramble" from the two greatest giants of Twentieth Century music. Reputedly from the soundtrack of 'Holiday Inn' we were invited to celebrate the festive season with the 1947 "White Christmas", and to herald Y2K the original 78s' far less famous backing number.

CHRIS CROZ QUIZ

The Sunday Late Show on BBC Radio South & West is the station to tune into if you're an addict of guessing games and good music. Bing's name and relevant records regularly crop up on Chris Robinson's Mystery Year, which means that the range of Crosby songs featured is unlimited. So we get a forty-seven year polarisation with "She Reminds Me Of You" and the duet of "Little Drummer Boy / "Peace On Earth" this time around. Apart from picking up on the Legends CD ("Man On Fire") Chris was also among those who conducted a popularity poll relating to the programme. Bing was voted the number one singer of the Twentieth Century and Irving Berlin the very best composer. That the two came together for the all time biggest selling record didn't go unnoticed, or featured, as on many other record programmes; but "Autumn Leaves", "Silent Night", "Auld Lang Syne" and "June In January" were among those musically illustrating the passing months. It was also a pleasure to hear the rarely played 1938 version of "Alexander's Ragtime Band", Berlin's earliest hit song, actively engaging the talents of the upbeat Victor Young Orchestra and Bing's distaff duettist of the time, Connee Boswell. Eddie Cantor is involved on the 78 with some dialogue; but not on this CD version. The full list of the twentieth century top ten singers as chosen by the listeners to Chris Robinson's Late Show was:

1. Bing Crosby
2. Glenn Miller
3. Nat King Cole
4. Ella Fitzgerald
5. Frank Sinatra
6. The Beatles
7. Elvis Presley
8. Peggy Lee
9. Perry Como
10. The Rolling stones

JUST GOOD FIENDS

By the time this magazine thuds on your doormat we shall be about halfway between two Hallow'een nights, but that's the way it goes with the spring issue. Harking back to the 1999 event there was Bing spooking it up with Messrs. Boris Karloff and Victor Moore on Dewi Griffiths' 'A String of Pearls' programme. This was a special hallow'een song devised for the Philco Radio Time show of the 29th. October 1947. The theme of the song being that modern youth was far more frightening than any ghost or goblin! What's that expression; the more things change the more they stay the same? Dewi, who hails from BBC Radio Wales, look you, also

conducted a poll among his listeners and came up with the result that Bing was the star you voted as number one, way ahead of Jolson, Miller and Sinatra. "A star whose amazing, easy ability to entertain spanned all those years." (of the 20th. Century). The top ten stars of the golden years as voted by Dewi's listeners were:

1. Bing Crosby
2. Al Jolson
3. Glenn Miller
4. Frank Sinatra
5. Nelson Eddy and Jeannette Macdonald
6. Deanna Durbin
7. Fred Astaire
8. Doris Day
9. Mario Lanza
10. Vera Lynn

"Good old Bing. Where would we be without him", was the opinion expressed by Keith Fordyce as he embarked upon a joint tribute to the Old Groaner and Johnny Mercer - another 20th. Century favourite in the composer stakes - who Bing once described as being 'The Huckleberry Finn of the music business.' No less than seven songs were featured to illustrate their shared talent with ditties as diverse as "Mister Meadowlark" and "Dearly Beloved". Again, the Legends CD was well featured on the Fordyce farrago of family favourites, and owes much of its popularity to the duetting presence of 'Satchmo', Rosie Clooney and Leslie Townes somebody-or-other.

It's a long way from Bristol to Boston in the U.S.A, but a request card from the 'tea party' town turned up in David Lowe's post-box requesting "Some Enchanted Evening" for a lady who hails from that bustling east coast port of our erstwhile colony - the circumstances of which remain a mystery. However, David was happy to oblige, along with any number of appropriate seasonal songs, and sentimental ballads some of which were more suited to the day on which this part of the column is being typed - 14th. February - at the same time noting that "The Anniversary Waltz" has been one of the most requested songs in his entire nine year tenure as presenter of 'As Time Goes By'. Others heard were "Children" for Maggie's granddaughter, Molly's, first birthday and a couple of Christmas songs from a long list that ICC member Len Hawkings sent through, even though he was only expecting just one. On balance, one of my top three Bing's was the comment for "The Kiss In Your Eyes". But how the Bing and Anne Shelton version of "Easter Parade" came to be played during the autumn and Christmas season I'm not too sure; but it's an always welcome piece of near vaudeville that has a spontaneous authenticity about it.

FRANK NOTES

"It wouldn't be Christmas without Bing" says the Tyneside host of 'Stars On Sunday' as he featured "Silent Night" and "Adeste Fideles" directly from the 1935 Brunswick 02054 78rpm record. He likes to use the original source where possible and both sides of the 12" 'Pennies from Heaven' film medley seventy-eight was another example. However, one has to keep pace with the times now and again and Frank headed into the year 2000 with three back-to-back tracks from the, by now, legendary, Legend compact disc thus making his traditional turntable redundant on this occasion. Two of them, both solo performances, were from films in which on the one hand Bing didn't have a singing role and, on the other, a film in which he had just a guest spot. Sorry, no prizes for the titles.

SMALL FRY

Before going on to some more of the bigger fish its worth mentioning that Peter Moreton, Max Bygraves, Hubert Gregg, John Richards and Russell Davies have all cast their nets into the oceans of Crosbyana and trawled up some treasures worth recalling. Max with "Gone Fishin'"; "Ida, Sweet As Apple Cider", featuring the Frying Pan Five, one of J.R.'s choices; and a classic version of "June In January", from a Kraft radio programme, studiously filleted by Dr. Swing. Clearly, Russell Davies was gutted that Bing and Mary sang 'I know she loves me' instead of the correct, more meaningful and potentially promising, 'I know she likes me' on "Lily Of Laguna"; but that's Russell for you. He just loves to pick over the bones. Meanwhile Hubert Gregg was nearly choking with laughter over the comedy routines performed by Bing with guest Fred Allen, and the satisfying send-up of "Goodnight, Irene" featuring a well known partnership boosted by the presence of a certain Miss Judy Garland.

'ALLO, 'ALLO, 'ALLO!

"Wot's all this then?"
"It's like this, officer; this little group - they called themselves the Happy Wanderers I think, and they were a lively lot - were busking in the street and I asked if could join them."
"Do you 'ave a licence to sing in the streets, sir?"
"Well, er, no."
"Then I'm afraid I'll 'ave to arrest you."
"I've never been arrested for singing yet. Cancelled; stoned....", reflects Bing, as this British television sketch unfolds, and he is hauled before the court for entertaining the passing pedestrians with a solo rendition of "The Sheik Of Araby"; the Happy Wanderers having rapidly dispersed upon sight of a patrolling bobby. With Miles Malleson as the presiding judge sympathetic to the seeming fall from grace of one of the world's, erstwhile, most popular entertainers, this was an amusing, audio excerpt from the TV production featured on Keith Skues' nightly radio programme. The courtroom scene concludes with the charge being dismissed upon hearing Mr. C's musical plea to the bench of "My Fate Is In Your Hands" in a very likeable and very English send up of magisterial proceedings. And all credit to Keith for giving air time to this extended recording now available to him and his listeners. Keith was another who played "Lily Of Laguna", which, along with "If There's Anybody Here", has been in vogue among the presenters recently. In this instance Keith also did some research and discovered that the lady of the title was a black girl and that Laguna is on the south-west coast of Brazil; though for additional information the composer, the accompaniment (John Scott-Trotter) and the year (1942) are all that really matter for this sprightly version of a very jaunty song. But who did write the song? LPs and 78s show it as being by Leslie Stuart, whereas the encyclopaedias state that it's a Ted Fio

Rito - Paul Francis Webster composition.

Nothing really anecdotal to report on the Bill and Angela Rennell's Harmony Night programme. It's just records all the way. As previously noted any chat is kept to the absolute minimum with only the listeners request titles read out. Lots of Bing - and very varied, as "Ghost Riders In The Sky", "San Antonio Rose" and "Temptation" will illustrate. Desmond Carrington continues his weekly Bing slot, as we've come to expect, and here again a goodly mix of Mr. C keeps the airwaves audience informed of the wide range of upwards of 2,000 song titles performed by him. "I've A Shooting Box In Scotland" and "The Secret Of Christmas" are representative. But Desmond also chose to play Bing's closing chapters philosophy song "That's What Life Is All About", with an added bonus by the inclusion of two postscript verses almost certainly written by Bing himself.

TEAM WORK

In noting the collaboration of Crosby, Carmichael and Mercer on the Oscar winning film song, "In The Cool, Cool, Cool, Of the Evening" Paul Barnes quoted Hoagy from his autobiography: "I didn't do anything but sit back and wait after writing the music". This inactivity in the face of the usual Oscar chasing publicity and promotional jostling paid off handsomely; though considerable credit must be given to Bing and Jane Wyman for their remarkable one-take performance in 'Here Comes The Groom', about which Johnny Mercer was to say that the duettists had performed far better than he had anticipated. This, we must assume, is a reference to the entire production sequence rather than any doubts about the vocal ability of the two artistes. Barnsey is continuing to rope in the listeners from far and wide, including the Netherlands, and others within the UK outside the legitimate reception area of his Norwich based studio. A situation that bodes well for the continuance of his enjoyable programme. This year the calendar song at the commencement of each month has been made doubly easy by the ICC's special calendar 2000 which does actually relate to genuine Crosby recordings this year. On top of which Barry Whittingham has produced a compact disc to accompany it. Stan White's contribution to this and the programme as a whole (as well as others) should also be noted. The CD features every song depicted and is clearly a collector's item. Two months have passed, at the time of collating this column, so the relevant songs have been played, with three extra, Kraft songs tagged on to the "Abraham" track for the 'blessed February date'.

Thanks to Paul for twice playing "I Can't Get Started" to illustrate Kenny Baker's "I started like Bunny Berigan and finished like Louis Armstrong" comment on his contribution to the proceedings of the Ken Barnes/Pete Moore version. The first playing was on the occasion of my birthday and the second showing for Valentine's Day. Bing's deleted ad libs on the original air-shot were also read out.

'Gold For Grown Ups', in the Eastern Counties, has also featured tracks from Legends and further team work from the Hope and Crosby partnership with amusing dialogue from a Bob Hope broadcast. For once, the gags and repartee were funny and have stood the test of time. But in the main Barnsey has stuck with most of his favourite Bings, all of which have been noted here in previous issues, and if I pick out just the one it might well be the wisdom of "Living One Day At A Time". Though for a personal favourite, unaffected by any philosophical criteria, "Hello Mom" is an understated, classic Crosby recording that Barnsey at the Beeb can keep on playing ad infinitum.

SO LONG, GEOFF

For once, a serious headline to conclude the column as I record, sadly, that over the Christmas holiday one of my best Bing mates shuffled off the mortal coil leaving me a legacy of memories of many a happy hour playing our kind of music. Geoff Block was one part of the greater number of members who prefer to remain in the background but who are the mainstay of the ICC through their support. Bing, Bob Crosby and their musical contemporaries were his life-long heroes outside of which the world barely mattered compared with browsing through the record racks of the local music shops. His knowledge of popular music, films and jazz was encyclopaedic and this column has benefited as a result on more than one occasion. Though it is for his friendship and hospitality that I shall miss him most. Needless to say his wish for some vintage Bing to be played at his funeral was fulfilled. Condolences are extended to his wife, Betty, and his son and daughters.

Bert Bishop February 2000

Top Ten Christmas

This programme was shown on the UK's Channel 4 on Christmas Eve and it featured Noddy Holder (formerly of the pop group Slade) looking at the top ten Christmas hits in the UK over the twentieth century. Starting in reverse order, Noddy looked at the following in a light hearted and humorous way:

10. I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day - Wizzard
9. Walking in the Air - Aled Jones
8. Fairy Tale of New York - Shane McGowan and Kirsty MacColl
7. I Believe in Father Xmas - Greg Lake
6. Mary's Boy Child - Boney M
5. When a Child Is Born - Johnny Mathis
4. Mistletoe and Wine - Cliff Richard
3. Merry Christmas Everybody - Slade
2. Imagine - John Lennon

Each segment had interviews and film of the artists involved and eventually Noddy introduced the number one Christmas hit with the words "One man symbolises the spirit of Christmas' and then we cut to various celebrities such as Johnny Mathis, Cliff Richard, Yoko Ono, and Aled Jones talking about the still unnamed song before Ken Barnes appeared on the screen saying:

> *"There was only one voice that was right for the winter months, that lovely warm, rich, - like warm brandy on a cold night - the voice was rich and deep - and crisp and even."*

and then as we expected, Bing appeared in the 'Holiday Inn' scene singing 'White Christmas' to Marjorie Reynolds. Kathryn Crosby came on screen talking about Bing and saying "everyone has grown up with 'White Christmas'". Photographs of Bing and the family were

interspersed with Kathryn's words. Bing himself as interviewed on the Parkinson show in 1972 then appeared talking about and then singing his famous song. Ken Barnes returned to remind us that Bing had said that a jackdaw with a cleft pallet could have sung the song and to prove this was not so, we were treated to a selection of appalling versions of it!

Kathryn spoke again about Christmases with Bing and of doing the annual Christmas shows with the family whilst extracts from these were shown, indicating how the children had virtually grown up on TV. Part of Bing's work with David Bowie was shown before Ken Barnes returned to say that he understood that the duet with Bing was David Bowie's biggest single. Ken added "There was no artist that was more Christmas than Crosby" before we finished with the final bars of the 'Holiday Inn' version of 'White Christmas'.

It was a very pleasing finale to a slightly unusual programme. A few days later, I challenged Ken Barnes about his statement that 'Peace on Earth / Little Drummer Boy' was David Bowie's biggest hit bearing in mind that songs such as 'Space Oddity' had hit number one and spent many weeks in the charts. He replied:

"Yes, the general feeling is that 'Little Drummer Boy' must be David Bowie's most successful single because it sold well outside of his customary market following. It was not, as you know, Bing's biggest single. That honour belongs to 'White Christmas'.

Another statistic which may interest you is that 'High Society' is generally regarded as Frank Sinatra's biggest grossing film. It was not, as you know, Bing's biggest. That honour belongs to 'White Christmas'.

I once asked Fred Astaire which of his films was the biggest in terms of box office takings. His answer was 'Blue Skies'.

Some interesting statistics from Ken who continues to do an excellent job in promoting Bing.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Keeping Track

A Compact Disc Review by Jim Reilly

The only bug that reared its head at the turn of the year was the flu one or similar and I am sure many of us could have done without it. The doom and gloom merchants were proved wrong and the Millennium bug fortunately failed to materialise and we had a peaceful transition into the year 2000. In this our 50th Anniversary year I have a mixed bag of some 14 CDs to review this time around and I am sure that there is something there for everyone. We have the latest Jonzo, two Jasmine's from Geoff Milne, some European imports together with discs from the USA. By way of a change I have also arranged a competition with prizes to be won. The BMG CDs that I first reported on in 1998 now look as if they are a little nearer to release, so it may be appropriate to keep your eyes open for them just in case. I understand that most of the delay was related to problems with copyright which have apparently now been resolved.

The Chronological Bing Crosby Vol. 19 **Jonzo Records JZCD-19** **UK**

1. Shoe Shine Boy (-A)
2. Shoe Shine Boy (-B)
3. South Sea Island Magic (-A)
4. South Sea Island Magic (-B)
5. Hawaiian Paradise (-A)
6. Hawaiian Paradise (-B)
7. For Love Alone
8. I Never Realised (-A)
9. I Never Realised (-B)
10. Beyond Compare
11. Dear Old Girl
12. Just One Word Of Consolation
13. Pennies From Heaven Medley [Pt.1] (DLA579-A)
14. Pennies From Heaven Medley [Pt.1] (DLA579-B)
15. Pennies From Heaven Medley [Pt.2] (DLA580-A)
16. The Way You Look Tonight with Dixie Lee Crosby
17. A Fine Romance with Dixie Lee Crosby
18. Me And The Moon
19. Sweet Leilani (-A)
20. Sweet Leilani (-B)
21. Blue Hawaii (-A)
22. Blue Hawaii (-B)

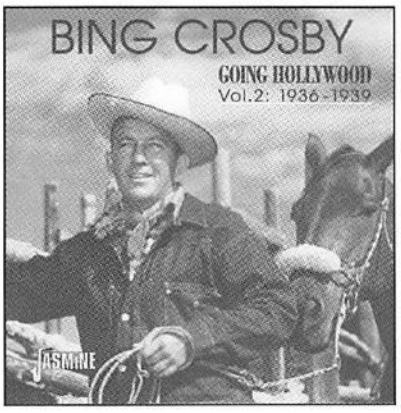
I know quite a few Members have been waiting for this CD. I must tell them that it has really been worth waiting for as this is an excellent album and I strongly recommend it to all. Bing was truly in great voice when he cut these tracks all those years ago and the recording engineer has done a fine job with the re-mastering. The sound quality is good throughout and I thoroughly enjoyed listening to this album. "Dear Old Girl" and "Just One Word Of Consolation" together with most of the alternate takes make their debuts to CD. This is a must for all collectors who like their "Bing" in such fine fettle. This CD is only obtainable in the UK and the rest of Europe from Jonzo Records PO Box 212, Harrow Middlesex HA3 7LD. Price £10.65 including pp. (or two for £21). Cheques to be made payable to Jonzo Records. USA and Canadian Members can obtain copies from Wig Wiggins (address inside front cover). Running Time: 70.48

Bing Crosby GOING HOLLYWOOD Vol. Two 1936 - 1939 (2CDS) **Jasmine Records JASCD 113/4** **UK**

CD1 ANYTHING GOES (1936) 1. Sailor Beware, 2. Moonburn (s/t), 3. My Heart And I, 4. You're The Top (s/t), 5. Shanghai-De-Ho w Ethel Merman (s/t), RHYTHM ON THE RANGE (1936) 6. Empty Saddles (s/t), 7. Round-Up Lullaby (s/t), 8. I Can't Escape From You (s/t), 9. Drink It Down / I'm An Old Cowhand w Martha Raye, Bob Burns, Louis Prima, Leonard Kinsky and The Sons Of The Pioneers (s/t), 10. The House Jack Built For Jill w Frances Farmer (s/t), PENNIES FROM HEAVEN (1936) 11. So Do I, 12. Pennies From Heaven, 13. Let's Call A Heart A Heart, 14. One Two Button Your Shoe WAIKIKI WEDDING (1937) 15. Nani Ona Pua (s/t), 16. Blue Hawaii w Shirley Ross (s/t), 17. Sweet Leilani, 18. In A Little Hula Heaven w Shirley Ross

(s/t), 19. Sweet Is The Word For You, DOUBLE OR NOTHING (1937) 20. Smarty, 21. All You Want To Do Is Dance, 22. It's The Natural Thing To Do, 23. The Moon Got In My Eyes, 24. After You (s/t). Running Time: 72.06

CD2 DOCTOR RHYTHM (1938) 1. My Heart Is Taking Lessons, 2. On The Sentimental Side, 3. This Is My Night To Dream, 4. Only A Gypsy Knows w Beatrice Lillie (s/t), SING YOU SINNERS (1938) 5. I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams (s/t), 6. Don't Let The Moon Get Away (s/t), 7. Laugh And Call It Love, 8. Small Fry w Fred MacMurray and Donald O'Connor (s/t), 9. Where Is Central Park, PARIS HONEYMOON (1939) 10. The Funny Old Hills, 11. I Ain't Got Nobody, 12. I Have Eyes w Shirley Ross (s/t), 13. You're A Sweet Little Headache, 14. Joobalai, EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN (1939) 15. Sing A Song Of Sunbeams, 16. Hang Your Heart On A Hickory Limb (s/t), 17. That Sly Old Gentleman, 18. East Side Of Heaven, THE STAR MAKER (1939) 19. Jimmy Valentine (s/t), 20. A Man And His Dream (s/t), 21. If I Was A Millionaire (s/t), 22. Go Fly A Kite (s/t), 23. I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now (s/t), 24. In My Merry Oldsmobile, 25. Schooldays (s/t), 26. Still The Bluebird Sings (s/t). Running Time: 71.33



This is the second album in the series of 'Bing Crosby Going Hollywood' produced by fellow member Geoff Milne. I briefly mentioned this double CD in the last issue of BING and having now listened to it I can recommend it as a thoroughly enjoyable double album - and the sound quality is very good throughout. Half of the numbers are from the film sound tracks and most of these are therefore new to CD. "Where is Central Park" was omitted from "Sing You Sinners" and has not appeared on CD previously although it was issued on one of the Australian "limited edition" LPs many years ago. The song "The House Jack Built For Jill" was omitted from the film "Rhythm On The Range" and this sound track version also makes its debut on CD. We are treated to an alternate sound track version of "Schooldays" as the children in the version actually used in the film drowned Bing's voice out. The main feature songs from this marvellous collection of Bing film songs have of course appeared on CD before but never in chronological order. Albeit that "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now" is very brief I am pleased to have this on CD as it is one of my favourite songs. Geoff Milne has written some very good liner notes and we get a nice colour photograph of Bing a la cowboy mode on the front sleeve. Price: £13.99

If you have difficulty in obtaining this CD from your normal sources it can be obtained from:- Jazmail, Unit 8, Forest Hill Ind. Estate, Perry Vale, London SE23 2LX at the post inclusive (UK Members) price of £14.00 (add £1.00 for abroad). All payments MUST be payable to JAZMAIL and members must also quote "as per offer in BING magazine".

A Night With The Stars **Jasmine Records JASCD 607** **UK**

The 1945 "Command Performance" Special Complete Show hosted by Bob Hope

CD 1: Introducing Bob Hope, (b) On The Atchison, Topeka & The Santa Fe, (a)(b)(c) "Party Sketch", (c) Along The Navajo Trail, (a) & Harry James: Banter, Harry James: Two O'clock Jump, (e) & Herbert Marshall: Banter, (e) So I Ups To Him, (a)(f) "Party Sketch", (f) Till The End Of Time, (a) & Jerry Colonna: "Party Sketch", Johnny Mercer & The Pied Pipers: Camptown Races, (a)(b)(d) & Johnny Mercer: Banter & Comedy Sketch, (d) Long Ago And Far Away, (a) & Jerry Colonna: "Party Sketch", The Pied Pipers: Embraceable You,

CD 2: (a)(b) "Party Sketch", (a)(g) "Party Sketch"; (g) Baia, (a)(h) & Kay Kyser: "Party Sketch", (h) You Can't Blame A Girl For Tryin', (a)(b) & Frank Sinatra: Banter, Frank Sinatra: If I Loved You, Bob Mitchell Boys Choir : Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town, President Harry Truman Speech , (a) Christmas 1945 Finale intro. (d) Christmas Message, (g) O, Come All Ye Faithful, (f) Hark, The Herald Angels Sing, (c) O, Little Town Of Bethlehem, (d) It Came Upon A Midnight Clear, (b) Silent Night, (a) Closing Christmas Message, Closing Theme: Over There. Running Times: CD1: 52.12, CD2: 51.19

(a) Bob Hope, (b) Bing Crosby, (c) Dinah Shore, (d) Judy Garland, (e) Jimmy Durante, (f) Ginny Simms (g) Frances Langford, (h) Cass Daley

Some members will recall that extracts from this show appeared on the Vintage Jazz Command Performance - Christmas 1945, VJC-1031-2 CD released in the USA in 1991 with the secondary title "Bob Hope's Christmas Party". This double album contains the complete show with duration of some 103 minutes whereas the AJV CD only had 77 minutes playing time. For those who did not get the earlier CD or indeed those who prefer completeness this is an excellent show with Bob Hope and Bing at their amusing best. Many celebrities also put in appearances on this double Jasmine album produced by Geoff Milne. It can also be obtained from Jazmail, Unit 8, Forest Hill Ind. Estate, Perry Vale, London SE23 2LX at the post inclusive (UK Members) Special price of £10.00 (add £1.00 for abroad). All cheques MUST be payable to JAZMAIL and members must also quote "as per offer in BING magazine". This special offer will net you a saving of at least £3.00.

Bing Crosby - "Road To Hollywood" Vol. 1 **Great Movie Themes CD600045** **Italy**

THE KING OF JAZZ (1930) 1. Happy Feet, 2. A Bench In The Park w Brox Sisters, 3. A Bench In The Park, 4. It Happened In Monterey - Non Bing, 5. I Like To Do Things For You, 6. Ragamuffin Romeo - Non Bing, 7. So The Bluebirds And The Blackbirds Got Together, 8. Song Of The Dawn. THE BIG BROADCAST (1932) 9. Dinah, 10. Please, 11. Here Lies Love. COLLEGE HUMOR (1933) 12. Learn To Croon, 13. Moonstruck, 14. Down The Old Ox Road, TOO MUCH HARMONY (1933) 15. Thanks, 16. The Day You Came Along.

Bing Crosby -"Road To Hollywood" Vol. 2 **Great Movie Themes CD600046** **Italy**

TOO MUCH HARMONY (1933) 1. I Guess It Had To Be That Way, 2. Black Moonlight, GOING HOLLYWOOD (1933) 3. Just An Echo In The Valley, 4. Beautiful Girl, 5. After Sundown, 6. We'll Make Hay While The Sun Shines, 7. Temptation, 8. Our Big Love Scene, WE'RE NOT DRESSING (1934) 9. Love Thy Neighbour, 10. Once In A Blue Moon, 11. Goodnight Lovely Little Lady, 12. May I, 13. She Reminds Me Of You, SHE LOVES ME NOT (1934) 14. I'm Hummin' I'm Whistlin' I'm Singin', 15. Love In Bloom, 16. Straight From The Shoulder

These two albums have the same overall content as volumes 2 and 3 of the Chanson Cinema set issued in 1995 ('Bing Crosby

In Hollywood 1930-33' CD010 and 'Bing Crosby In Hollywood 1933-34' CD102). The quality is very good and if you missed out on the French set these albums are very much cheaper and well worth purchasing. They are attractively packaged and the sleeves feature pictures of Bing's homes at Toluca Lake and North Hollywood respectively. Running Times: Vol. 1 - 49:24, Vol. 2 - 50:07 Price: £5.99 each

The Bing Crosby Collection **HMV 7243 5 22231 2 1** **EU**

1. That's What Life Is All About
2. The Best Things In Life Are Free
3. I Got Rhythm
4. A Little Love And Understanding
5. Change Partners
6. Cabaret
7. The More I See You
8. How Are Things In Glocca Morra
9. Hello Dolly
10. My Resistance Is Low
11. Breezin' Along With The Breeze
12. I'll Never Fall In Love Again
13. Heatwave
14. What I Did For Love
15. The Way We Were
16. We've Only Just Begun
17. In The Cool Cool Cool Of The Evening w F Astaire
18. With A Song In My Heart
19. I Love To Dance Like They Used To Dance
20. Some Sunny Day
21. Send In The Clowns
22. A Couple Of Song And Dance Men w F Astaire

I was quite surprised to come across this album in HMV as part of their in-house series. One glance at the titles will tell you that this is another compilation from the United Artist sessions when Bing made that marvellous collaboration with Ken Barnes and Pete Moore. The quality is of course what you would expect and this is an enjoyable album with Bing proving that he could still handle a tune in his latter years (I hope this does not start up those old arguments again). Running Time 66.35 Price £5.99

Day By Day (2CDs) **Nostalgia Gold Collection NGC CD008** **Germany**

CD1 1. Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive w the Andrew Sisters, 2. Pistol Packin' Mama w the Andrew Sisters, 3. You Belong To My Heart, 4. Moonlight Becomes You, 5. Swinging On A Star, 6. My Baby Said Yes, 7. Easter Parade, 8. Connecticut w Judy Garland, 9. I'll Be Seeing You, 10. Smile Right Back At The Sun, 11. Road to Morocco, 12. New San Antonio Rose, 13. Sierra Sue, 14. When My Dreamboat Comes Home, 15. Trade Winds, 16. Day By Day, 17. Put It There Pal w Bob Hope, 18. Don't Fence Me In w the Andrews Sisters, 19. Don't Be That Way, 20. I Love You (Porter)

CD2 1. San Fernando Valley, 2. South America Take It Away w the Andrews Sisters, 3. Sunday Monday Or Always, 4. Remember Me, 5. Mine w Judy Garland, 6. Friendly Mountains, 7. It's Been A Long Long Time, 8. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby, 9. I Can't Begin To Tell You, 10. Far Away Places, 11. McNamara's Band, 12. Yah-Ta-Ta, Yah-Ta-Ta w Judy Garland, 13. Alexander's Ragtime Band w. Al Jolson, 14. The Girl With The Pigtails In Her Hair, 15. Hot Time In The Town Of Berlin w the Andrews Sisters, 16. White Christmas (1947), 17. I'll Be Home For Christmas, 18 Adeste Fideles (1942).

Running Time:53.17

I am indebted to fellow member Norman Jones who kindly sent me details of this album. There is nothing new on these CDs although it is true to say that "Smile Right Back At The Sun", "The Girl With The Pigtails In Her Hair" and "Friendly Mountains" have only had limited exposure to CD (I wonder where they got their masters?). The alternate take of "Yah-Ta-Ta-Yah, Yah-Ta-Ta" is used and this is only the second time this had been on CD. The overall quality is very acceptable and I must say that it is a good album - you can't really go very far wrong with all these lovely Bing standards. It's just a pity that we get so many repeats. Price: £11.99

Thanks For The Memories Mr Crosby **J Bird Records 6 1746 80300-2** **USA**

1. Lady Of Spain
2. PS I Love You
3. If This Isn't Love
4. Old Buttermilk Sky
5. Mona Lisa
6. Don't Let The Stars Get In Your Eyes
7. Hawaiian Wedding Song
8. Song From Moulin Rouge (Where Is Your Heart)
9. Five Minutes More
10. Wish You Were Here

I found the sleeve notes to this album to be informative and in some cases most amusing. Let me quote the front sleeve "featuring Never released recordings from his infamous Radio Show". I know that Bing does not always get a fair crack of the whip these days but "infamous" is a bit much. "Never before released" is also somewhat confusing (look at the titles). I also quote from the notes. "This particular album, recorded from one of Bing's radio broadcast, was given to the late Bill Hester from the Crosby family and later passed onto producer Tony Camillo who has re-mastered each track and has made them available for all to enjoy for years to come"..."We hope Bing Crosby fans around the world enjoy the treasures found on this compact disc"... ..."Special Thanks To: The Crosby Family, R Farrow, Stephanie Plowman of Gonzaga University, Jon Oye for the artwork, Steven Lewis whose valuable assistance helped so much, Jay & Bob at JBird Records who believed and kept us on our toes and to our maker, the Lord, who makes all things possible and brought everyone together so we could bring Bing's recordings to you". I come to the amusing highlight "Old Buttermilk Sky" is shown as "Ol' Butter Milkyway" and "If This Isn't Love" becomes "If This Is Love". In fairness, I should say that some of the tracks are better than I have heard them before although there is an annoying tendency for tracks to start and end abruptly with the occasional blurry endings. Had good fading in and out techniques been employed this could have been a far better CD. Running Time: 25:08 Price: $12.95

Bing Crosby's Christmas Classics **Capitol Records 72435-21433-2-0** **USA**

1. Winter Wonderland
2. Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas
3. What Child Is This / The Holly And The Ivy
4. The Little Drummer Boy
9. Frosty The Snowman
10. I Wish You A Merry Christmas
11. Do You Hear What I Hear
12. Pat-A-Pan / While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks

5. O Holy Night
6. The Littlest Angel
7. Let It Snow Let It Snow Let It Snow
8. Hark The Herald Angels Sing / It Came Upon A Midnight Clear
13. Christmas Dinner Country Style
14. Peace On Earth / Little Drummer Boy w David Bowie

This is a re-issue of the Capitol CD of the same name, complete with four additional titles (tracks 11-14). Theses additions improve what was already a great album and Will Friedwald provides the new sleeve notes. The quality of this album is excellent with Bing at his Christmas best. I still find the festive period too short to play all those lovely Crosby Christmas Classics. Running Time: 40:58 Price: $18.00

Bing Crosby (2 CDs) Cocktail Hour Double Take CRG 218005 USA

Disc One 1. Swinging On A Star, 2. New San Antonio Rose, 3. I Love You (Porter), 4. Sweet Georgia Brown, 5. Temptation, 6. Too Marvellous For Words, 7. May I, 8. June In January, 9. I'm An Old Cowhand, 10. Pennies From Heaven, 11. Mr Gallagher And Mr Shean, 12. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby, 13. Sunday Monday Or Always, 14. Sierra Sue.
Running Time: 41:01

Disc Two 1. White Cliffs Of Dover, 2. Yankee Doodle Dandy, 3. I Don't Want To Walk Without You, 4. Song Of Freedom, 5. You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To, 6. Ridin' Herd On A Cloud, 7. Victory Polka, 8. It's All Over Now, 9. As Time Goes By, 10. I'll Be Seeing You, 11. Shoo Shoo Baby, 12. There'll Be A Hot Time In The Town Of Berlin, 13. The Road To Victory, 14. Long Ago And Far Away. Running Time: 34:38

Although the sound quality is perfectly acceptable, very little care was taken with the production of this double album. Three of the titles shown on the sleeve are not even on the CDs and four that are included are not listed (the 28 titles you actually get are shown above). You would think that anyone going to the trouble of producing a double album would at least know what titles appear on it. There are also a few mistakes with some of the song titles - 'I Love You' as 'I Love You Truly' - 'Yankee Doodle Dandy' as 'Yankee Doodle Boy' - 'The Road To Victory' as 'Go On The Road To Victory'. So all in all this mixture of commercial and radio material all of which has previously appeared on CD makes this imported set very expensive. This album appears to be one of a series which includes Mario Lanza, Billie Holiday, Doris Day, Sarah Vaughan and Perry Como to name but a few. I wonder if all of these are so shoddily produced. Price: £18.00 (Tower Records London) Price: $17 US

Bing Crosby - The Old Groaner Volume 2 Audio Book & Music Co. ABMMCD 1093 UK

1. I'm An Old Cowhand (From The Rio Grande), 2. Dinah w the Mills Bros. 3. Ciribiribin w the Andrews Sisters, 4. Don't Fence Me In w the Andrews Sisters, 5. Deep In The Heart Of Texas, 6. Mary (What Are You Waiting For) 7. The Last Round-Up, 8. Hello Hello - Kay Thompson & The Williams Bros., 9. Great Day, 10. Please, 11. Thanks, 12. That Lucky Old Sun, 13. If I Knew You Were Coming I'd Have Baked A Cake w Bob Hope, 14. Zip A Dee Doo Dah, 15. On Top Of Old Smoky w Burl Ives, 16. Medley w the Mills Bros.: Up A Lazy River / Paper Doll, 17. How Are Things In Glocca Morra, 18. The Jones Boy, 19. You Gotta Start Off Each Day With A Song w Jimmy Durante, 20. May The Good Lord Bless And Keep You w Nat King Cole and the Andrews Sisters

This is the second in the "Old Groaner" series following the same format of volume 1, with a mixture of commercial and radio material repeated. In the main, the sound quality is good, but we do get to hear the odd clicks on "On Top Of Old Smoky". I don't know how "Hello Hello" crept into this compilation as it is non-Bing as I am sure everyone knows. I have long liked "Great Day" and "May The Good Lord Bless And Keep You" and neither of these can get too much exposure on CD as far as I am concerned. I enjoyed the album and although none of the titles is new to CD, I am pleased to add it to my collection. Running Time: 57.14 Price: £7.99

Bing Crosby King Crooners Going For A Song GFS041702 UK

1. Dinah
2. Can't We Talk It Over
3. Shine
4. Paradise
5 .Sweet Georgia Brown
6. Please
7. How Deep Is The Ocean
8. A Ghost Of A Chance
9. Brother Can You Spare A Dime
10. Let's Put Out The Lights
11. Your Getting To Be A Habit With Me
12. I've Got The World On A String
13. Temptation
14. Did You Ever See A Dream Walking
15. Love Thy Neighbour
16. Love In Bloom
17. Basin Street Blues
18. My Melancholy Baby
19. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby
20. Sweet Potato Piper

"People's Friend" magazine advertised this free CD in the national press and all you had to do to get a copy was to purchase the magazine and send off a coupon. It is a pleasant enough CD but unfortunately most of the titles have had great exposure on CD. If you are interested in obtaining this album it may well still be available as part of a four CD set King Crooners GFS04017 Price £9.99 - the other three crooners being Perry Como, Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra. Running Time: 61.02

Memories Of Yester Years Volume 13 Bing Crosby Radio Duets Samba MTLCD5063 Canada

1. Enjoy Yourself w Bob Crosby, 2. Whispering Hope w Bob Crosby, 3. Everybody Loves My Baby w The Firehouse Five Plus Two, 4. The Wedding Samba w the Andrews Sisters, 5. You've Gotta Start Off Each Day With A Song w Jimmy Durante, 6. Lazy River / Paper Doll w the Mills Brothers, 7. If I Knew You Were Coming I'd Have Baked A Cake w Bob Hope, 8. Louise / Mimi w Maurice Chevalier, 9. For Me And My Gal w Judy Garland, 10. On Top Of Old Smoky w Burl Ives

Although this CD was released in 1997 I have only just come across it thanks to friend and fellow member Phil Clarke. As you can see there is nothing new on this album unless you include the first track which is about as poor as anything I have heard on CD with some weird extraneous noises. Apart from this one track, the quality is good, throughout. Running Time: 24:12 Price: Unknown

Bing Crosby On Radio

Following the success of the Krafty Young Bing 4 CD set I am pleased to include another Bar One album of Kraft Music Hall and this time we get a complete programme. As per the previous Bing On Radio discs this is priced at £10.00 including packaging and posting (UK members) - please make cheques payable to B Whittingham. To order this CD contact Barry Whittingham, "El Rancho Grande" 25c Garton Close, Cinderhill, Nottingham, NG6 8RZ. USA members should contact Wig Wiggins address inside front cover.

Bing Crosby's KMH Broadcast of March 6 1941 **Bar One Records KRAFT1**

Ken Carpenter, Bob Burns, The Music Maids, Connie Boswell, Thurston Knudson, Augie Goupil, Lionel Barrymore and Eddie Bracken with John Scott Trotter & His Orchestra

1. a) Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives To Me w Music Maids, b) Even Steven - Connie Boswell, c) You Walk By, d) Loch Lomond w Music Maids, e) Manhattan w Connie Boswell,
2. a) The Moon Won't Talk, b) Oreilha Orei - Knudson & Goupil (Drums and Vocals) c) Brazilian Nights - Knudson & Goupil (Drums), d) May I Never Love Again - Connie Boswell, e) Nell And I

I am sure that you will enjoy this KMH programme as much as I did. This is the first time I have heard this complete programme and I must say that the quality is good throughout. I particularly like Bing's renditions of "You Walked By" and "Nell And I" and Connie Boswell is always a pleasure to listen to. My only disappointment is that there are only two tracks on the CD making it difficult to find individual titles although I suspect this was done to make mastering easier.
Running Time: 58.47 Price: £10.00

GUEST APPEARANCES

PEPE Original Soundtrack Album **Collectors Choice Music CCM-1132** **USA**

10 Tracks (1 Bing) Medley: Pennies From Heaven, Let's Fall In Love and South Of The Border
This has the same content as the Sound track LP 'Pepe' and indeed it has the same sleeve design. Bing's track lasts for 1 minute 44 secs which is not particularly good value for money. The sleeve is also a bit deceptive as it shows Bing's medley as three tracks implying that there are twelve tracks when in fact there are only ten. Most Crosby collectors will be familiar with this album with the other titles sung by Shirley Jones, Maurice Chevalier, Sammy Davis Jr. and Bobby Darin.
Running Time: 34:01 Price $12.95

Legends - Superstars Of The 20th Century (4CD Box Set)K-Tel ECD 3491-4 **EU**

Volume Two 25 Tracks (5 Bing) Swinging On A Star, The Whiffenpoof Song, The Bells Of St Mary's. Sunday Monday Or Always and Don't Fence Me In. Volumes One, Three and Four - no Bing content
The other superstars are Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, Frankie Laine, Johnnie Ray, Rosemary Clooney, Patti Page, Nat King Cole, Ray Charles, Dean Martin, Marlene Dietrich, Marilyn Monroe, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Judy Garland, Peggy Lee, Al Jolson, Mario Lanza and Dick Haymes. I don't know whether this is still available as this was a special offer in the Daily Mirror Price £9.99 with the Christmas Legends CD (see below) given away as a free gift to all readers

Christmas Legends **K-Tel TM9044** **EU**

10 Tracks (3 Bing) White Christmas (1947), Here Comes Santa Claus w The Andrews Sisters and O Come All Ye Faithful.
This was a free CD given away in a Daily Mirror Christmas Offer with the Legends 4CD (shown above) as an optional purchase for £9.99 or sold individually for £2.99 each.

Toys For Tots Christmas Stars **TKO Records AK10331 MCPS** **Holland**

17 Tracks (3 Bing) White Christmas, Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer w Ella Fitzgerald and O Come All Ye Faithful My copy came courtesy of Wig Wiggins. Price:$5.00

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT

5 Hollywood Sings CDs or Audio Cassettes Must be Won
Busy Doing Nothing? Then enter this FREE COMPETITION (Closing Date 31st May 2000)
(Open to all Members of the ICC - One entry per member. Winners names will appear in the next issue of BING)

ANSWER THE QUESTION Who was Bing's leading lady in the film in which he sang **BUSY DOING NOTHING?** To enter the Competition send your answer together with your name and address on a post card, stating whether you want CDs or Cassettes, to Bing Hollywood Sings Competition, Perennial Music Co Ltd, 69, Rivington Street, London, EC2A 3AY.

Hollywood Sings Golden Voices From The Silver Screen (2 CD Set) **Perennial Music PERCD 003**

CD 1 LULLABY OF BROADWAY- Winifred Shaw, LULU'S BACK IN TOWN - Dick Powell, JEEPERS CREEPERS - Louis Armstrong, OVER THE RAINBOW - Judy Garland, BUSY DOING NOTHING w William Bendix and Sir Cedric Hardwicke, A FOGGY DAY -Fred Astaire, LET YOURSELF GO - Ginger Rogers, FOR ME AND MY GAL - Judy Garland & Gene Kelly, I FALL IN LOVE TOO EASILY - Frank Sinatra, BUTTONS AND BOWS - Bob Hope, BLUEBERRY HILL - Gene Autry, I'VE GOT A GAL IN KALAMAZOO - Glenn Miller, PENNSYLVANIA POLKA - The Andrews Sisters, INKA DINKA DOO -Jimmy Durante, ROAD TO MOROCCO w Bob Hope, IT'S MAGIC ñ Doris Day, IT MIGHT AS WELL BE SPRING - Dick Haymes, I YI YI YI (I LIKE YOU VERY MUCH) - Carmen Miranda, LYDIA THE TATTOOED LADY w Groucho Marx, APRIL SHOWERS - Al Jolson, CAN'T HELP SINGING - Deanna Durbin, SEPTEMBER SONG - Walter Huston, BALLIN' THE JACK - Danny Kaye, COULD YOU USE ME? - Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, OL' BUTTERMILK SKY - Hoagy Carmichael. Running Time: 72.32

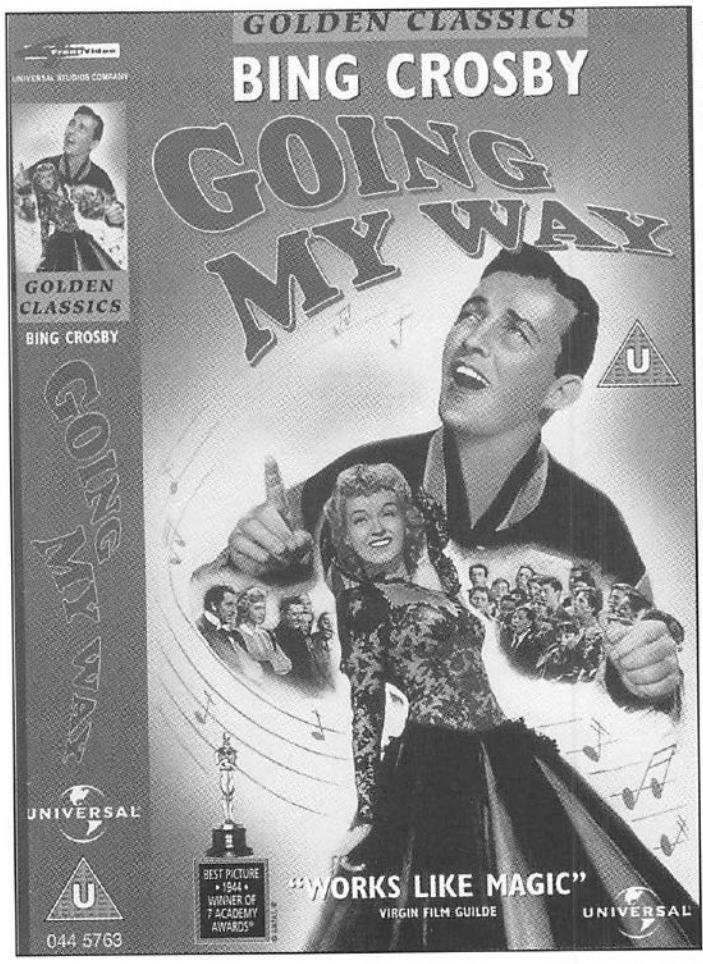
CD 2 TOOT TOOT TOOTSIE - Al Jolson, YES SIR THAT'S MY BABY - Eddie Cantor, AIN'T IT A SHAME ABOUT MAME? - Mary Martin, SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES - Irene Dunne, NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT - Fred Astaire, I'M IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE - Frances Langford, I'VE GOT MY LOVE TO KEEP ME WARM - Dick Powell, THE MOON OF MANAKOORA - Dorothy Lamour, TOO BEAUTIFUL TO LAST - Tony Martin, SLUMMING ON PARK AVENUE - Alice Faye, THEY CALL ME SISTER HONKY TONK - Mae West, FALLING IN LOVE AGAIN - Marlene Dietrich, ALL OF ME - Frank Sinatra, STORMY WEATHER - Lena Horne, AN APPLE FOR THE TEACHER w Connie Boswell, IF I DIDN'T CARE - The Ink Spots, COCKTAILS FOR TWO - Spike Jones & His City Slickers, ZING WENT THE STRINGS OF MY HEART - Judy Garland, LOVE WALKED IN - Kenny Baker, WILL YOU REMEMBER - Jeanette MacDonald & Nelson Eddy, THE TURNTABLE SONG - Deanna Durbin, I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN - Virginia Bruce, THEY ALL LAUGHED - Fred Astaire, SOME OF THESE DAYS - Sophie Tucker, THANKS FOR THE MEMORY - Bob Hope & Shirley Ross. Running Time: 72.12

Here we have 50 marvellous musical memories and our man gets to perform 'Busy Doing Nothing', 'Road To Morocco', 'An Apple For The Teacher' and 'Lydia The Tattooed Lady' which to my knowledge makes its debut on CD and of course comes from Philco Radio Time of April 30, 1947. You stand a good chance of winning this most enjoyable double album just by answering the simple question and sending a post card to Perennial Music. If you miss out in the draw, you can still purchase the album at a discounted price of £19.50 CDs, Audio Cassettes £17.50. These discount prices will be held indefinitely for BING readers. This also applies to the two previous albums "The Song Is You" and "The Fabulous Forties" as reviewed in the last issue of BING. All three albums can only be obtained from Perennial Music Co Ltd., 69, Rivington Street, London, EC2A 3AY. through the post or telephone on 24 Hour FREEPHONE Ordering Service on 0800 5976497 quoting the International Crosby Circle so that you get your discount.

NEW VIDEO

Going My Way **Golden Classics Universal Studios 044 5763** **UK**

I am indebted to Barry Whittingham who told me about this video release. We have waited a long time for Bing's most celebrated Academy award winning film to find its way onto video when it appears that videos are now on their way out and are to be superseded by DVD. Nevertheless, it is very good to get this marvellous film on a commercially released video. It would be strange if this was the last Crosby film released on conventional video as I believe that I am right in saying that 'The Bells Of St Mary's' was the first - good old Chuck O'Malley Running Time: 2 hours 2 mins. Price: £5.99



I must apologise to those members who kindly sent details of CDs particularly those that I did not get around to thanking personally. I can only claim that my failure to do so is due to my being busy with other Crosby matters such as the Year 2000 calendar. I am generally pleased with the response to the calendar and I wish to thank Michael O'Toole for his great design. Many members have told me that this is the best ICC calendar produced to date and if we can sell the 50 odd unsold copies we should be able to come up with something of similar quality for next year. I also wish to thank our USA representative Wig Wiggins (and his good lady, Laura) for his great support in selling to our USA members. David Currington, our man in Australia, also sold more copies than in previous years and my thanks are also due to David for his efforts. We did not sell too many calendars to the rest of Europe perhaps because they were not aware of their availability until receiving the winter issue of BING. We hope to correct this by having the calendars printed by the time that the summer issue of BING falls on your doormat.

Jim Reilly

STOP PRESS • STOP PRESS • STOP PRESS

The sad news of the death of Lesley Gaylor on March 18th has just been received. A full tribute will appear in Bing 125.

Come A Runnin'

Gary Hamann recently sent us some fascinating details about Bing in the 1960s and 1970s which we have used to update the Crosby diary we maintain. One entry read as follows:

September 16, 1963 Come A Runnin'

Unsold pilot comedy television series aired. 30 minutes. Dr David Latham leaves his urban medical practice for a small town. Regular characters include Ruth Hussey as the nurse and Stu Erwin as the town pharmacist. Theme song, "Come A Runnin' " sung by Bing Crosby. Bing Crosby Productions.

Anyone ever been aware of this before? Has anyone heard the song 'Come A Runnin' by Bing? When I was in Palm Springs last year, I did notice a newspaper report on February 4, 1962 stating that Bing had recorded a song at Legion Hall, Palm Springs to be used over the title of a new TV pilot being produced by Crosby Enterprises. Perhaps that's the one. I'd like to know more.

Spokane Sings Crosby

In February, the Spokane Opera Guild presented a special show called "Spokane Sings Crosby," in the Lair at Spokane Community College, Mission and Greene.

The setting evoked the glory days of Bing utilising a "Cocoanut Grove" -type nightclub where a "live radio" broadcast is taking place. Champagne was served at the start of the proceedings and a Bing video accompanied dinner. Then a group of 12 Spokane singers sang 23 songs made famous by Bing, including "Where the Blue of the Night," "I Surrender Dear," "Swinging On a Star," "I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams" and "White Christmas." Tickets were $50 each and the evening was a benefit for Spokane Opera.

Manchester United - Champions of the World

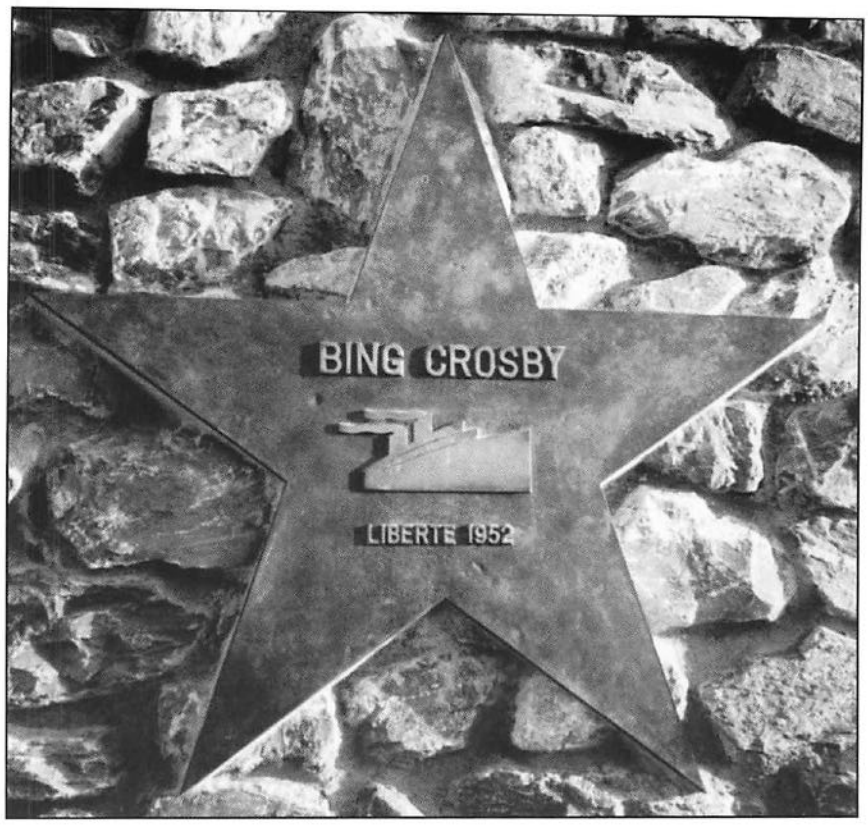
I live in Wilmslow which is a dormitory area for Manchester, a city which has two famous soccer clubs. Several of the players for both teams are my neighbours. At present it is Manchester United which is in the ascendancy and after winning the treble of the English Football League, the F.A. Cup and the European Cup in 1999, they became inter-continental club champions of the world in November when they beat Palmeiras 1-0 in Tokyo to win the Toyota Cup. So very interesting, but what's it got to do with Bing? Well the Club has an excellent museum and tour and some years ago, I saw a picture of Bing there with the 1952 championship winning team. When Irish members Derek and Dorothy Perkins visited Manchester in October, I took them to visit the Museum which they thoroughly enjoyed but we couldn't see the picture of Bing.

Enquiries with Mark Wylie, the Curator, were at first unsuccessful, but Mark persisted in his search and he has now produced the photograph below which we reproduce courtesy of Manchester United Museum and Tour Centre. The picture shows the 1952 League Championship Team in Hollywood in May / June 1952 and I would guess that they met Bing on the set of 'Road to Bali'. Matt Busby is on Bing's left. It really is amazing how Bing turns up in the most unexpected places!

Our thanks to Mark Wylie for his trouble in locating this photograph.

Maggie's Magic Moments

Maggie Ryan continues to work very hard promoting Bing in the West Country and you may remember that she arranged for us to have a photo of Bing arriving at Plymouth on September 18, 1952 which we used on the inside back cover of the last issue. The photographer, Norman Hine, drew Maggie's attention to the fact that a plaque commemorating Bing's arrival has been fixed in place at the entrance to Millbay Docks in Plymouth. Norman kindly supplied a photo and the plaque measures 89 cms (2' 11") point to point. Amazing! I wonder if Bing knew about it? Just shows how famous he was in those days.



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